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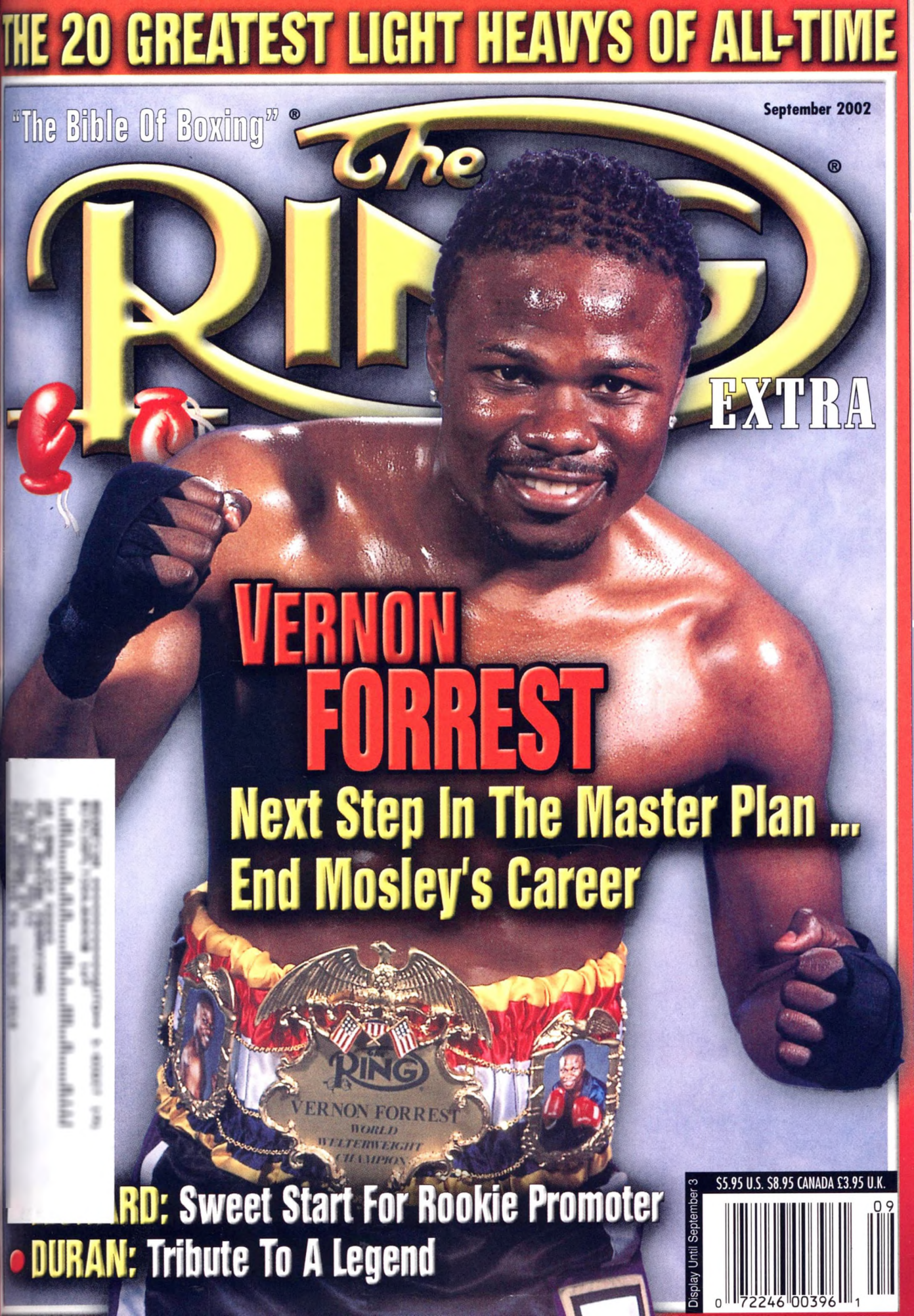

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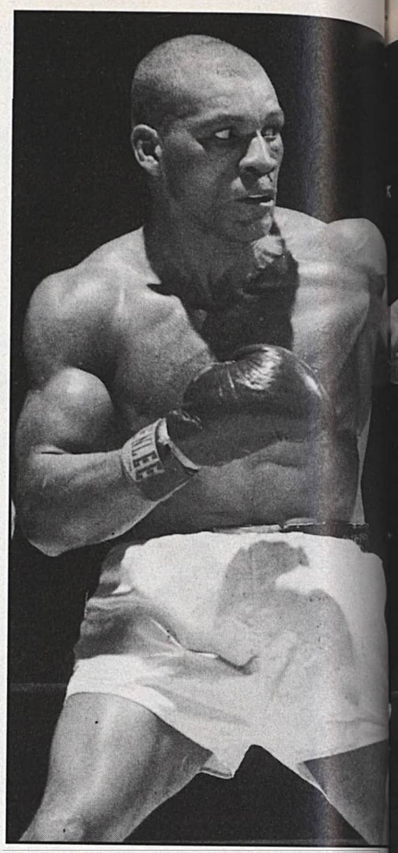

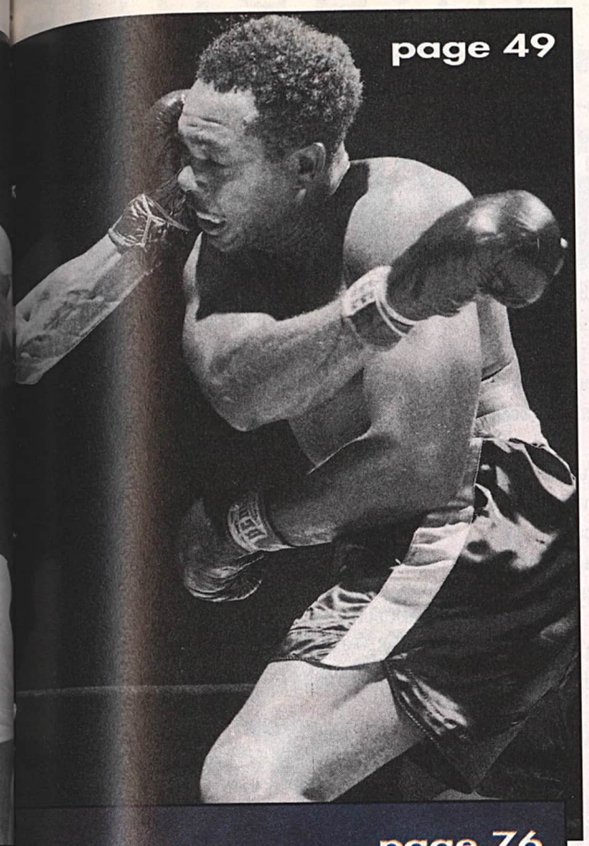

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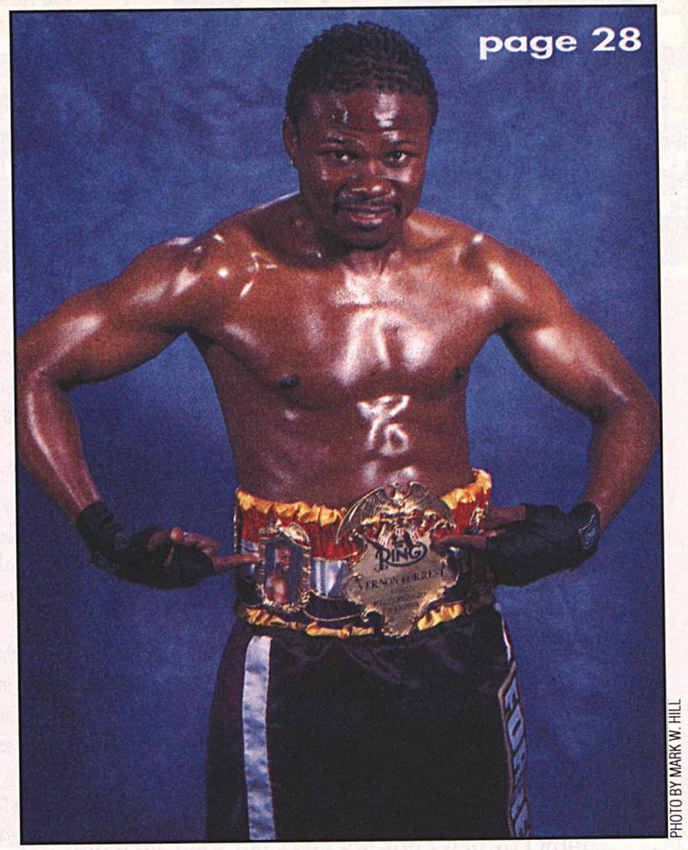

PHOTO BY MARK W. HILL

Cover:
Vernon Forrest by Mark W. Hill

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RINGSIDE

When THE RING launched its new championship policy in the April 2002 issue, I knew that we needed support from other media outlets in order to have a fighting chance of returning integrity to championship boxing. I also knew that despite an overwhelming vote of approval from our readers, the rigorous manner with which we intend to apply the policy would not always prove popular. Recently, there has been action on both fronts.

From the start, our closest allies have been Max Kellerman and Brian Kenny, the studio hosts of ESPN2's *Friday Night Fights*, who have continually backed THE RING's policy during their weekly broadcasts.

The next major endorsement came from Dan Rafael, the highly influential boxing writer for *USA Today*. Dan's piece was quickly followed by similar articles by Michael Rosenthal in the *Los Angeles Daily News* and Kevin Tatum in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*.

Rosenthal interviewed Bob Arum for his column, and the promoter told him that he thought THE RING's new championship policy was "an excellent idea." But the media and industry insiders are not the only ones touting our efforts. Among those interviewed by Rafael was junior featherweight champion Paulie Ayala, who won THE RING's recognition with his second victory over Bones Adams.

"I'd rather represent THE RING belt than the organizations after the experience I had with the WBA, which stripped me just because I fought another champion [Adams]," Ayala told Rafael. "I know THE RING won't do that. They will allow me to lose the belt in the ring. Getting this belt is huge. It makes me champion in my weight class regardless of the organization."

Jose Luis Castillo, however, might not be as pleased with us as Ayala, especially when he sees Floyd Mayweather listed as the world lightweight champion in this issue's RING ratings *(page 14)*.

Like the HBO broadcast team, most viewers, and much of the media covering the bout, I thought Castillo won. My card (via TV) favored him by 116-113, but that doesn't mean THE RING won't recognize the official winner as world champion, regardless of how much I or anybody else disagrees with the verdict.

To disregard the official decision would only create confusion. After all, bad decisions are a fairly regular occurrence. The way to combat them is not to ignore the facts and pretend the right guy won. Instead, THE RING will use its pages to condemn the decision, campaign for better judges, and push for a rematch.

I've seen worse decisions than Mayweather-Castillo, and some people whose opinion I respect felt that "Pretty Boy" deserved the nod. Nevertheless, I thought the three judges who scored the fight—Anek Hongtongkam, John Keane, Jerry Roth—did a poor job. They're not quite in Eugenia Williams' league, but certainly not a trio I want to see arbitrating major championship bouts in the future. Boxing deserves better. So does Castillo, who should get an immediate rematch.

A return bout would also be good for Mayweather, whose stock has plummeted recently, and not just because of his disputed win over Castillo. A few weeks before the fight, Mayweather pleaded guilty on two counts of domestic violence and one battery count. He now faces mandatory prison time if convicted on a third domestic violence count in Nevada within seven years.

THE RING's message to Mayweather is simple: Do the right thing. Give Castillo a rematch—and keep your hands to yourself outside of the ring. That way, maybe they won't be so sore when you get another chance to prove yourself against Castillo.

Nigel Collins
Editor-in-Chief

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The RING

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"The Bible Of Boxing"

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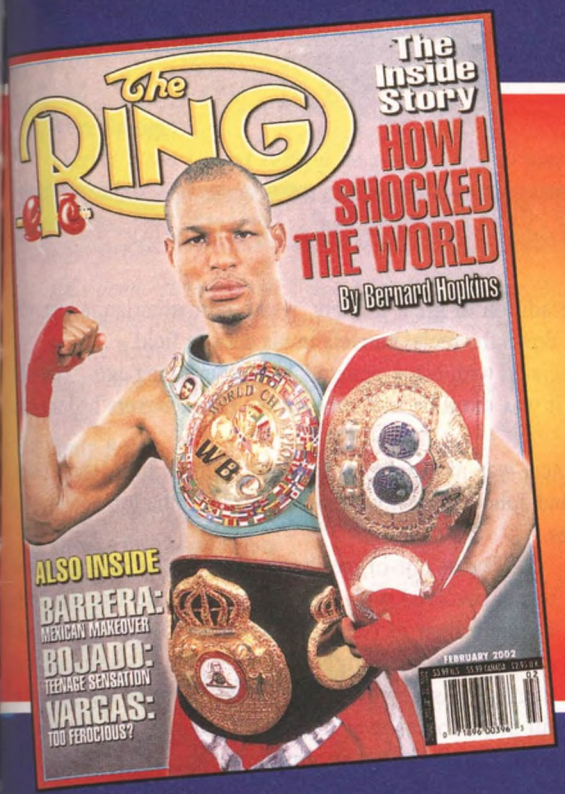

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ROUND ONE

GEORGE FRANCIS, 1928-2002

George Francis, in the time-honored tradition of great trainers, was a humanitarian, a man wh did as much as anyone in Britain to break down the racial barriers in his chosen field.

"For most of my career I've been associated with black boxers," he said not long ago. "This ma not seem unusual now, but in the 1960s it was more or less unheard of. Black boxers had no fans Black boxers couldn't get fights."

By the time he ended his career, Francis was associated with black fighters like John Conteh Frank Bruno, Cornelius Boza-Edwards, and John Mugabi, who had all risen to the top and owed so much to the man who laced up their gloves.

Francis and Boza-Edwards in 1976

"He was one of the first trainers in the boxing busines to get involved with black fighters," said Brendan Ingle former trainer of Naseem Hamed and Herol Graham, two of Britain's finest fighters of the past 20 years. "Bunny Sterling was a brilliant black fighter, one of the most skill- ful practitioners ever to grace a boxing ring. He won the British and European middleweight titles, and without George Francis he may never have got the chance."

Francis was found hanging in early-April in his north London home, where he lived by himself. He was 73. The depression that infiltrated his strong spirit after he lost his wife, Joan, and youngest son, Simon, both to cancer within the past three years, became too much for him in the end.

The sadness that his life ended all alone was felt deeply by those who could always rely on him to be there when he was needed.

"George was around when I first started out in the game and he was still there when I reached the end," recalled Conteh. "People sometimes describe him as just a conditioner, but he was much more than that. He was a great trainer, coach, motivator and mentor, just a great man."

Francis was born in 1928 in the slums of Camden Town. It was as a bareknuckle fighter that he gained his earliest experiences in boxing, and at the St. Pancras Boxing Club in London he flour- ished as an innovative teacher of the hardest game. The men he worked with excelled and his repu- tation was established.

His first major success was Sterling, who came to Britain from Jamaica at the age of eight and under Francis' guidance won British and European middleweight titles.

"He came across always as a really nice guy," said Britain's foremost boxing promoter, Frank Warren, who got to know Francis when he staged Frank Bruno's successful challenge for the WBC heavyweight title against American Oliver McCall in September 1995. "Frank, when he'd get in trouble, used to really get in trouble, but that night he fought a different fight. George got him very motivated and worked hard on his jab and stamina and it paid dividends."

Francis is survived by his daughter, Mary, and sons William and Daniel.

—Brian Doogan

THE OFFICIAL RANKINGS

While it's often been said that good referees are the ones you don't notice, the bad ones stick out like Don King's hair. Lousy refs can make you so angry sometimes, you feel like rushing the ring or kicking in the screen of your TV set. Neither course of action is advisable, but that doesn't mean we can't vent our spleen by blasting the bad ones in print. But you also have to give credit where credit is due, so we've come up with two lists: the 10 best and the 10 worst of active referees.

The Best

1. Steve Smoger

There's a very good reason he was picked to work Hopkins-Trinidad, Forrest-Mosley, and virtually every other major match east of the Mississippi in recent years.

2. Joe Cortez

He's been "firm but fair" in a host of big fights since 1982 without being involved in a major screw up.

3. Kenny Bayless

Best of the new breed—astute, athletic, focused, and nearly invisible.

4. Rudy Battle

Another veteran who has built a fine body of work while avoiding controversy.

5. Stanley Christodoulou

Has a knack for getting the best out of fighters without interfering.

6. Frank Garza

Not as high profile as some on this list, but the way he handled Tyson-Golota is typical of his excellent work.

7. Robert Byrd

Steady and reliable; maintains control, but doesn't meddle.

8. Lou Moret

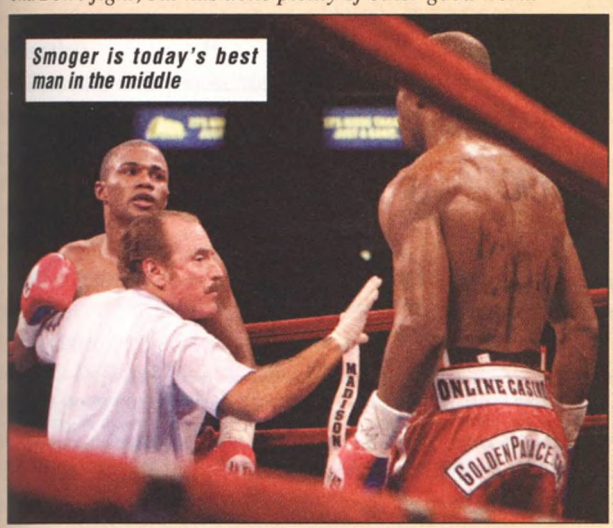
California veteran still among the best; remember how well he handled Mosley-De La Hoya?

9. Tony Weeks

Another young up-and-comer; did a first-rate job under difficult conditions in the messy Hopkins-Echols II foul-a-thon.

10. Eddie Cotton

Made a name for himself disqualifying Golota in the second Bowe fight, but has done plenty of other good work.



Smoger is today's best man in the middle

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

The Worst

1. Jay Nady

Horribly inconsistent: Almost allowed Trinidad to decapitate Vargas, but prematurely pulled the plug on Corrales-Gainer—and that prefight grin is like fingernails on a blackboard.

2. Kenny Chevalier

Seems to be on an ego trip; his work in the Rosado-Pettway fight alone was enough to qualify him for the referee's hall of shame.

3. Michael Ortega

Hard to watch without getting angry; frequently seems unsure of what to do, a potentially fatal flaw in a ref.

4. Paul Sita

His handling of the Gainer-Norwood bout might have been the worst job of refereeing since Jack Welch held up Ad Wolgast while counting out Joe Rivers in 1912.

5. Arthur Mercante Jr.

Used to stand idle as helpless fighters lost brain cells (Whitaker-Hurtado, Bennett-Hutchinson), but now seems gun-shy after working the Jones-Scottland tragedy.

6. Bobby Ferrara

Handling of Weis-Camacho Jr. was so blatantly one-sided he can probably get a gig with the WWF.

7. Telis Assimenios

We'll never forgive him for botching Tua-Rahman so badly.

8. Dale Grable

Permitting Hamed to bodyslam Soto is indicative of his inept style.

9. Mike Ryan

Did he think he was doing Tomasello a favor by failing to stop his fight with Dotse in the last two rounds?

10. Vic Drakulich

Larry Merchant was right, he is "officious"—see Mayweather-Castillo.

Nady finally stops the Vargas massacre

TV FIGHTS OF THE MONTH

DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
3-29-02	Atilla Levin W 10 Ron Guerrero	ESPN2	h	C	B-	C
We were kind of digging Levin until he did that bad Ali impression after the decision was announced						
3-29-02	Sedreck Fields W 6 Willie Palms	ESPN2	h	C-	B	C+
Anyone else think Fields could go places if he got a little serious?						
3-29-02	Vince Phillips W 10 Nick Acevedo	ESPN2	w	B-	B+	C
Good for Phillips, but please, no rematch with Tszyu						
3-30-02	Jeff Lacy W 10 Bobby Jones	Show	sm	C+	C+	B-
Lacy proves he can go the distance with a guy with no punch; decent fight just the same						
3-30-02	Zahir Raheem W 12 Joe Morales	Show	f	C	B-	C
Raheem scores knockdown in fourth on way to clear decision win						
3-30-02	**Felix Machado Tech. Win 6 Martin Castillo**	**Show**	**IBF jb**	**A-**	**B+**	**C**
This was just getting good when the ringside doctor decided he wanted some face time on the tube						
3-30-02	**Ricardo Mayorga KO 5 Andrew Lewis**	**Show**	**WBA w**	**A**	**A+**	**B+**
Mayorga can't beat Mosley or Forrest, but everyone else should run the other way						
4-5-02	Oscar Leon W 12 John Michael Johnson	ESPN2	f	B	C+	C+
Upset! What were Johnson's managers thinking putting him in with a mover?						
4-5-02	Joe Mesi KO 6 Keith McKnight	ESPN2	h	C+	C	C-
How many times do you think Sugar Ray has watched Mesi and thought to himself, I can whup him*?*						
4-9-02	Antwun Echols W 12 Kabary Salem	ESPN2	sm	B	C+	D+
Anyone else think Echols against William Joppy would be a great fight?						
4-12-02	Julian Wheeler W 10 Isidro Tejedor	ESPN2	l	C+	C-	C+
Streaking Wheeler stays busy with solid win over late sub						
4-12-02	Daniel Alicea W 12 Brian Adams	ESPN2	l	C+	B+	C+
Alicea easily outworks passive Adams over the distance						
4-13-02	Guillermo Jones W 10 Tim Williamson	Show	c	C-	B+	B
Late surge leads to split decision victory for former junior middleweight title challenger						
4-13-02	Edwin Cassiani KO 3 Luis Collazo	Show	w	C	B+	B
We wish Jay Nady would decide already what kind of referee he wants to be						
4-13-02	Lance Whitaker D 10 Ray Austin	Show	h	B-	C-	D+
Don't you just hate it when something like this happens to a good guy like Rock Newman?						
4-13-02	David Tua KO 9 Fres Oquendo	Show	h	A-	A	B-
Can someone explain why Tua keeps getting matched against movers?						
4-20-02	Stevie Johnston W 12 Alejandro Gonzalez	HBO	l	A-	B-	B-
If we don't get Mayweather-Castillo II, let's see Mayweather-Johnston I						
4-20-02	**Floyd Mayweather W 12 Jose Luis Castillo**	**HBO**	**World l**	**A+**	**A**	**B**
What a completely predictable decision						
4-20-02	Yuri Tsarenko W 12 Gary Lockett	Show	jm	C	C+	C
Upset! Bullish Tsarenko mauls undefeated Lockett over distance						
4-20-02	Joe Calzaghe W 12 Charles Brewer	Show	sm	A	A	B
You can't deny Calzaghe anymore; he dominated Brewer from start to finish						
4-21-02	Jeremy Williams KO 1 David Bostice	FOXSN	h	C	C+	B
Against third-tier guys, Williams as impressive as ever						

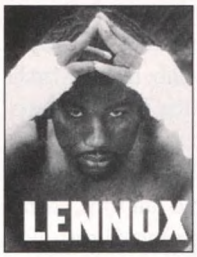
Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(World/Alphabet title fights in **bold** type)

Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Network key: PPV—Pay-Per-View; Show—Showtime; FOXSN—Fox SportsNet; Uni—Univision; Telem—Telemundo, Telef—Telefutura

THE BOXING BOOKSHELF



Lennox, a new book about you know who, is a lot like the fighter it glorifies—enigmatic and moody.

It's a large format, coffee table-style pictorial without the glossy paper and color photos we've come to expect from the genre. Blaise Hart, who has documented his friend's career for the past six years, presents hundreds of black-and-white shots taken at various locales around the world. The text, which takes up a relatively small amount of space, is by screenwriter Melissa Mathison (*E.T.*). Both writer and photographer are clearly enamored with their subject.

The strength of the book is the access Hart and Mathison were afforded by the notoriously private heavyweight champion.

Readers looking for bone-crunching action shots will be disappointed. The handful of fight photos included are among the weakest entries. Instead, Hart gives us a behind-the-scenes and sometimes personal glimpse of Lewis. A number of the photos approach fine art, others are of the grainy, out-of-focus school.

Mathison is a keen observer, and despite a quirky style and no former boxing knowledge, she provides some insight into a man who has managed to remain obscure throughout more than a decade in the public eye. Don't expect too much, though. This isn't a biography, just a thin series of sketches.

Bottom line: *Lennox* (Little, Brown UK, 192 pages, hardbound, $24.95) is for obsessive boxing book collectors and hardcore Lewis fans. Others should probably settle for a quick flip-through at the bookstore.

—Nigel Collins

LANE AILING, BUT FIGHTING

Lane is fighting back from his stroke

One of the fight game's most respected and recognizable ambassadors, former referee turned promoter and television personality Mills Lane, suffered a stroke on March 31 at his home in Reno, Nevada, and is believed to have been unconscious for at least 12 hours before being discovered. But despite the dire circumstances, Lane was making a faster-than-expected recovery as of press time.

"The stroke was a moderate stroke and the doctor said he had never seen anybody come this far this fast with this kind of stroke," said Lane's son, Tommy, a week after the stroke occurred.

The 64-year-old Lane's wife, Kaye, was out of town when he fell ill, but when he was discovered the following morning, he was rushed to the intensive care unit at St. Mary's Regional Medical Center. Lane, best known for his "Let's get it on!" tagline and for disqualifying Mike Tyson in the "Bite Fight" with Evander Holyfield, was walking, laughing, eating ice cream, and sipping wine just a few days later, and began speaking shortly after that. He was experiencing weakness on his right side, however.

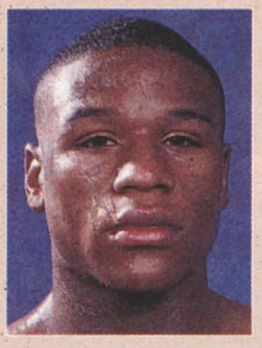
The outpouring of support for Lane was overwhelming, but not surprising given his popularity among boxing fans. He received hundreds of voice mails in the first few days after the stroke, plus a heartfelt testimonial from the on-air team at ESPN2's *Friday Night Fights*.

"This is the most nervous I've ever been on the air, talking about Mills right now," said studio analyst Max Kellerman. "I'm such a big fan of his, like so many people, and when I met him finally, he didn't disappoint as a person. He exceeds your expectations."

Lane's sons reported that he was enjoying watching *The Godfather* from his hospital room the week after his stroke. And just like Don Corleone, who made a miraculous recovery after having six bullets pumped into him in broad daylight, Lane is a fighter, and if anyone can come back with maximum force, it's "Maximum Mills."

—Eric Raskin

OUTSIDE THE ROPES



Mayweather: Avoids jail

One of boxing's biggest stars is on the cusp of big trouble, as **Floyd Mayweather** pled guilty in late-March in Las Vegas Justice Court to two counts of domestic violence and one count of battery. The guilty plea allows Mayweather to avoid jail time, as he instead received a six-month suspended sentence and two days of house arrest for alleged attacks on the mother of one of his three children. But "Pretty Boy" will face mandatory prison time if convicted on a third domestic violence count within seven years. Another domestic violence charge, involving the mother of Mayweather's other two children, was dropped as part of the plea bargain … Mayweather's pal **Mike Tyson** faced more allegations of wrongdoing in early-April, as a stripper and her boyfriend accused the former heavyweight champ of assault at a Phoenix, Arizona, gentleman's club. As of press time, no charges had been filed, and eyewitnesses interviewed by the Phoenix Police Department said Tyson had done nothing wrong … Former lightweight titleholder **Stevie Johnston** spent a few days in jail in late-March and early-April for failing to pay child support. He reportedly owed $100,000 to three women, and was released from behind bars on the condition that his boxing purses (he had a $100,000 purse awaiting for an April 20 HBO fight) be put toward his back payments … Fledgling **Duva Boxing** took a major step toward joining the big boys of boxing promotion when they announced in early-April the signing of **Kirk Johnson**, the mandatory challenger to the WBA heavyweight belt. Johnson received a $1.1-million signing bonus and a guarantee of at least $1-million for a proposed summer bout with **John Ruiz** … Although a Nevada judge recently determined that it was a violation of the First Amendment for the Nevada Athletic Commission to ban temporary tattoo advertisements on fighters' bodies, ESPN went ahead and announced in late-March a "no tolerance" policy that includes fining promoters $10,000 if fighters on their cards wear the tattoos. The ESPN stance is that the tattoos "debase" the fighters and that the network has a right to regulate what is seen on their air … There are two deaths to report this issue that were the result of in-ring incidents. **Emiliano Valdez**, who went into a coma following a January '00 bout with **Teddy Reid**, never emerged from the coma and died in late-March from complications stemming from head injuries. The Dominican junior welterweight was 28. And 22-year-old Japanese flyweight **Yoshihiro Irei**, who fell into a coma following a six-round decision loss to **Yoshinori Naito** in late-March, died 16 days later. He had been knocked down in the final seconds of the sixth round, was saved by the bell, and then fell unconscious moments later, having suffered a brain hemorrhage … Former featherweight title claimant **Sal Bartolo**, who held the NBA belt from 1944-'46 while **Willie Pep** was recognized generally as the real champ, died in mid-March at a nursing home in his native Massachusetts at the age of 84. Bartolo beat **Phil Terranova** for the NBA strap, but lost to Pep by 12th-round kayo in June '46 in a unification bout, one of three losses Bartolo suffered against the legendary "Will O' The Wisp" … Veteran trainer **Alberto "Beto" Martinez** died of congestive heart failure in late-March. Martinez worked at times as a cutman for **Muhammad Ali** and also worked the corners of contenders **Nico Perez** and **Ruben Castillo**, among others … Veteran boxing writer **Jack Tree** died early in the year in Berlin, Germany, at the age of 82. Tree, a native of England, moved to Germany after World War II and was THE RING's German correspondent for 34 years.

Bartolo: Dead at 84

THE PUNCHLINES

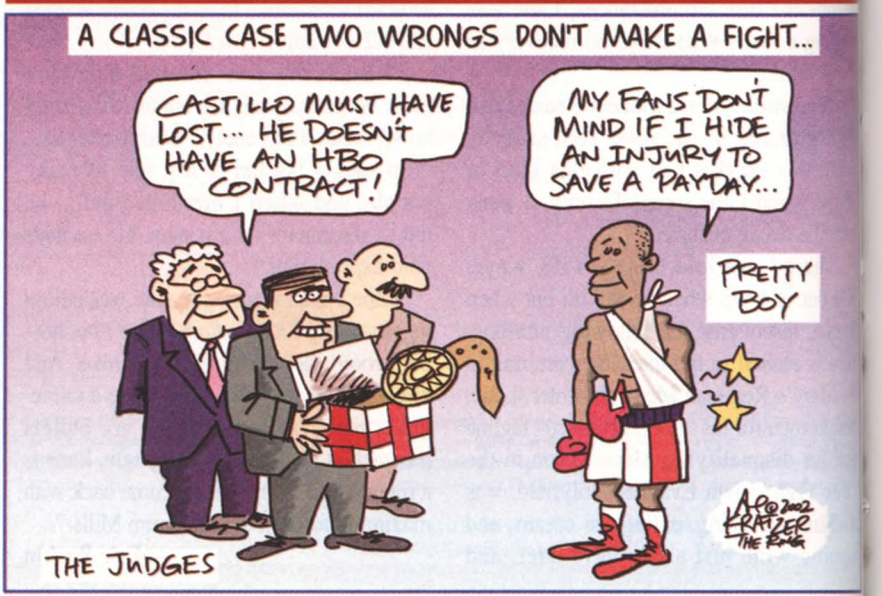
"No doubt the name Don Ho has deep meaning for Tyson. But too much Hawaiian punch and Tyson will get lei'd out."

—New York *Post* columnist Wallace Matthews writing about Tyson's choice to train in Maui

"Don't take your shirt off. As long as you don't take your shirt off, anything you want to say, go ahead."

—Teddy Atlas, to Max Kellerman, after Fernando Vargas and Floyd Mayweather both removed their shirts while being interviewed in successive weeks on ESPN2 *Friday Night Fights*

AL KRATZER'S VIEW



"THE BIBLE OF BOXING"

RATINGS ANALYSIS

(For period ended April 23, 2002)

POUND-FOR-POUND

1. **BERNARD HOPKINS** Middleweight
2. **ROY JONES** Light Heavyweight
3. **MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA** Featherweight
4. **VERNON FORREST** Welterweight
5. **FELIX TRINIDAD** Middleweight
6. **SHANE MOSLEY** Welterweight
7. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER** Lightweight
8. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA** Junior Middleweight
9. **RICARDO LOPEZ** Junior Flyweight
10. **KOSTYA TSZYU** Junior Welterweight

HEAVYWEIGHTS: David Tua improves from ninth to 10th on the strength of his come-from-behind TKO of Fres Oquendo (formerly ninth). Oquendo exits, which makes room for Vitali Klitschko at number 10.

CRUISERWEIGHTS: No changes.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS: No changes.

SUPER MIDLEWEIGHTS: Joe Calzaghe (second last issue) switches with Sven Ottke (first last issue) due to his win over Charles Brewer, which was much more emphatic than either of Ottke's points wins over the Philadelphia veteran. Brewer's loss drops him from fifth to sixth, while Thomas Tate (sixth last issue) jumps to number five.

MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Harry Simon leaps from fifth to second by beating Armand Krajnc, who slips from fourth to fifth. Simon's advancement pushes William Joppy and Howard Eastman down one spot each to third and fourth, respectively.

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS: No changes.

WELTERWEIGHTS: Previously unranked Ricardo Mayorga catapults into the second spot thanks to his TKO of Andrew Lewis, who falls from second to fifth. Mayorga's arrival shoves everybody else down one rung and forces Golden Johnson (10th last issue) out of the rankings.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS: No changes.

LIGHTWEIGHTS: Floyd Mayweather's highly controversial decision over Jose Luis Castillo earns "Pretty Boy" THE RING's recognition as world champion. Castillo remains the number-one contender. Stevie Johnson climbs from fourth to second due to his impressive decision over Alejandro Gonzalez, who fills the vacancy left at number 10 now that Mayweather has ascended to the champion's position above the ratings.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS: Crashing the rankings at number five is Yodsanan Nanthachai, who decisioned Lakva Sim (sixth last issue); Sim departs. Also leaving is Jongkwon Baek (fifth last issue), who has been inactive. Baek's exit pushes those below him up one notch each and makes room for Daniel Attah at number 10.

FEATHERWEIGHTS: Mbulelo Botile (10th last issue) is dropped for inactivity. Daniel Seda takes his place.

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS: No changes.

BANTAMWEIGHTS: Johnny Bredahl zooms from fifth to third after stopping Eidy Moya, who tumbles from fourth to fifth. Bredahl's big win also forces Rafael Marquez down a slot from third to fourth.

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS: Despite his controversial technical decision loss to third-ranked Felix Machado, Martin Castillo advances from 10th to sixth with his strong showing. Also moving up is Pedro Alcazar (now seventh), who trades places with less active Jesus Rojas (now eighth). The shakeup at 115 pounds continues with the departure of Samson Toyota-Thailand (fifth last issue), who has announced his retirement. This makes room at number 10 for former titleholder In Joo Cho to sneak back in.

FLYWEIGHTS: Pongsaklek Wongjongkam (second last issue) overtakes Eric Morel (first last issue) due to his greater activity and his recent string of impressive showings. Medgoen Toyota-Thailand (seventh last issue) leaves after it was discovered that he'd lost a fight last year that we only recently became aware of. His exit pushes those previously ranked below him up one spot each and allows room for Gerson Guerrero at number 10.

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS: No changes.

STRAWWEIGHTS: No changes.

POUND-FOR-POUND: Mayweather's uninspiring performance against Castillo plummets him from fourth to seventh, pushing those previously ranked below him up one place each. ■

THE RING RATINGS

For Period Ended April 23, 2002

Harry Simon ascended three spots at middleweight by beating Armand Krajnc

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

Fighters recognized as champions by THE RING are rated at the top of their division, with the top 10 contenders listed below.

Championship vacancies can be filled in one of two ways: by unifying all three alphabet titles in a division; or by winning a box-off between THE RING'S number-one and number-two contenders, or, in certain instances, a box-off between our number-one and number-three contenders.

The only three occasions when a fighter will lose his championship status are when he retires, moves to another weight division, or is defeated in a championship bout.

Ratings By The Editors
Records By Fight Fax Inc.

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight Unlimited

Champ: LENNOX LEWIS
England 39-2-1 (30)

1. **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO**
Ukraine 38-1 (35)
2. **MIKE TYSON**
Catskill, NY 49-3 (43)
3. **CHRIS BYRD**
Flint, MI 34-2 (19)
4. **HASIM RAHMAN**
Baltimore, MD 35-3 (29)
5. **KIRK JOHNSON**
Canada 32-0-1 (23)
6. **EVANDER HOLYFIELD**
Fairburn, GA 37-5-2 (25)
7. **JOHN RUIZ**
Chelsea, MA 37-4-1 (27)
8. **JAMEEL McCLINE**
Port Jefferson, NY 27-2-3 (16)
9. **DAVID TUA**
New Zealand 40-3 (35)
10. **VITALI KLITSCHKO**
Ukraine 31-1 (30)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 154 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA**
Whittier, CA 34-2 (27)
2. **FERNANDO VARGAS**
Oxnard, CA 22-1 (20)
3. **WINKY WRIGHT**
St. Petersburg, FL 43-3 (25)
4. **FRANCISCO CASTILLEJO**
Spain 52-5 (35)
5. **BRONCO McKART**
Monroe, MI 45-3 (29)
6. **DANIEL SANTOS**
Puerto Rico 25-2-1 (20)
7. **KASSIM OUMA**
W. Palm Beach, FL 15-1-1 (10)
8. **ALEX BUNEMA**
Dallas, TX 19-3-1 (11)
9. **STEVE ROBERTS**
England 29-0 (14)
10. **ROMAN KARMAZIN**
Russia 29-0-1 (18)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 126 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA**
Mexico 54-3 (39)
2. **ERIK MORALES**
Mexico 41-0 (31)
3. **NASEEM HAMED**
England 35-1 (31)
4. **JOHNNY TAPIA**
Albuquerque, NM 51-2-2 (28)
5. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ**
Mexico 38-2 (30)
6. **DERRICK GAINER**
Pensacola, FL 38-5 (24)
7. **MANUEL MEDINA**
Mexico 60-11 (27)
8. **FRANKIE TOLEDO**
Paterson, NJ 40-6-1 (15)
9. **JULIO PABLO CHACON**
Argentina 43-2 (31)
10. **DANIEL SEDA**
Puerto Rico 18-0 (15)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 122 pounds

Champ: PAULIE AYALA
Ft. Worth, TX 34-1 (12)

1. **MANNY PACQUIAO**
Philippines 33-2-1 (24)
2. **BONES ADAMS**
Henderson, KY 41-5-3 (19)
3. **WILLIE JORRIN**
Sacramento, CA 28-0-1 (12)
4. **LEHLO LEDWABA**
South Africa 33-2-1 (22)
5. **OSCAR LARIOS**
Mexico 43-3-1 (30)
6. **MICHAEL BRODIE**
England 32-1 (23)
7. **YODDAMRONG SITHYODTHONG**
Thailand 27-0-1 (12)
8. **OSAMU SATO**
Japan 25-1-2 (14)
9. **ENRIQUE SANCHEZ**
Mexico 30-2-2 (21)
10. **ISRAEL VAZQUEZ**
Mexico 32-2 (24)

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 118 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **TIM AUSTIN**
Cincinnati, OH 24-0-1 (21)
2. **VEERAPOL SAHAPROM**
Thailand 36-1-1 (26)
3. **JOHNNY BREDAHL**
Denmark 52-2 (26)
4. **RAFAEL MARQUEZ**
Mexico 27-3 (25)
5. **EIDY MOYA**
Venezuela 15-2 (8)
6. **ADAN VARGAS**
Mexico 37-3-1 (23)
7. **HERIBERTO RUIZ**
Mexico 25-1-2 (12)
8. **GENARO GARCIA**
Mexico 26-3 (16)
9. **TOSHIAKI NISHIOKA**
Japan 22-3-2 (13)
10. **CRUZ CARBAJAL**
Mexico 21-11-1 (17)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 190 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **VASSILIY JIROV** Kazakhstan 31-0 (27)
2. **JOHNNY NELSON** England 42-12-1 (28)
3. **JEAN-MARC MORMECK** France 27-2 (19)
4. **WAYNE BRAITHWAITE** Guyana 17-0 (14)
5. **EZRA SELLERS** Washington, D.C. 24-5 (22)
6. **O'NEIL BELL** Atlanta, GA 17-1 (16)
7. **VIRGIL HILL** Bismarck, ND 46-4 (22)
8. **ALEXANDRE GUROV** Ukraine 32-3-1 (27)
9. **MARCELO DOMINGUEZ** Argentina 32-4-1 (17)
10. **JORGE CASTRO** Argentina 119-8-3 (83)

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 175 pounds

Champ: ROY JONES Pensacola, FL 46-1 (37)

1. **DARIUSZ MICHALCZEWSKI** Germany 46-0 (36)
2. **ERIC HARDING** Philadephia, PA 21-1-1 (7)
3. **ANTONIO TARVER** Orlando, FL 19-1 (16)
4. **REGGIE JOHNSON** Houston, TX 42-7-1 (24)
5. **MONTELL GRIFFIN** Chicago, IL 42-3 (29)
6. **DAVID TELESCO** Port Chester, NY 26-3 (21)
7. **JULIO GONZALEZ** Huntington Beach, CA 28-1 (18)
8. **BRUNO GIRARD** France 40-2-2 (7)
9. **LOU DEL VALLE** Bronx, NY 31-2-1 (21)
10. **CLINTON WOODS** England 32-1 (19)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 168 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **JOE CALZAGHE** Wales 33-0 (27)
2. **SVEN OTTKE** Germany 26-0 (5)
3. **BYRON MITCHELL** Ozark, AL 24-1-1 (17)
4. **ANTWUN ECHOLS** Davenport, IA 27-4-1 (24)
5. **THOMAS TATE** Houston, TX 41-6 (28)
6. **CHARLES BREWER** Philadelphia, PA 37-9 (26)
7. **ERIC LUCAS** Canada 35-4-3 (13)
8. **MADS LARSEN** Denmark 40-1 (34)
9. **MANUEL SIACA** Puerto Rico 15-4 (14)
10. **MARKUS BEYER** Germany 24-1 (10)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 160 pounds

Champ: BERNARD HOPKINS Philadelphia, PA 41-2-1 (30)

1. **FELIX TRINIDAD** Puerto Rico 40-1 (33)
2. **HARRY SIMON** Namibia 23-0 (17)
3. **WILLIAM JOPPY** Washington, D.C. 33-2-1 (24)
4. **HOWARD EASTMAN** England 32-1 (29)
5. **ARMAND KRAJNC** Sweden 26-1 (19)
6. **KEITH HOLMES** Washington, D.C. 35-3 (23)
7. **HASSINE CHERIFI** France 32-5-1 (20)
8. **ANTONIO PERUGINO** Italy 20-0 (7)
9. **TITO MENDOZA** Panama 26-3 (19)
10. **ROBERT ALLEN** Atlanta, GA 32-4 (24)

WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 147 pounds

Champ: VERNON FORREST Atlanta, GA 34-0 (26)

1. **SHANE MOSLEY** Pomona, CA 38-1 (35)
2. **RICARDO MAYORGA** Nicaragua 24-3-1 (22)
3. **ANTONIO MARGARITO** Mexico 26-3 (18)
4. **THOMAS DAMGAARD** Denmark 29-0 (23)
5. **ANDREW LEWIS** Guyana 21-1-1 (19)
6. **ANTONIO DIAZ** Coachella, CA 37-4 (26)
7. **MANUEL GOMEZ** Mexico 20-10 (16)
8. **MICHELE PICCIRILLO** Italy 37-1 (23)
9. **CORY SPINKS** St. Louis, MO 29-2 (11)
10. **DANNY PEREZ** El Cajon, CA 27-2 (17)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 140 pounds

Champ: KOSTYA TSZYU Australia 28-1-1 (23)

1. **SHARMBA MITCHELL** Washington, D.C. 48-3 (29)
2. **ZAB JUDAH** Brooklyn, NY 27-1 (21)
3. **DeMARCUS CORLEY** Washington, D.C. 27-1-1 (16)
4. **BEN TACKIE** Ghana 24-2 (15)
5. **RANDALL BAILEY** Miami, FL 25-1 (25)
6. **JESSE JAMES LEIJA** San Antonio, TX 43-5-2 (17)
7. **MICKY WARD** Lowell, MA 37-11 (27)
8. **OKTAY URKAL** Germany 29-1 (9)
9. **ARTURO GATTI** Jersey City, NJ 34-5 (28)
10. **OMAR WEIS** Argentina 34-3-3 (16)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 135 pounds

Champ: FLOYD MAYWEATHER Grand Rapids, MI 28-0 (20)

1. **JOSE LUIS CASTILLO** Mexico 45-5-1 (41)
2. **STEVE JOHNSTON** Denver, CO 34-2-1 (16)
3. **PAUL SPADAFORA** Pittsburgh, PA 35-0 (14)
4. **LEONARD DORIN** Canada 20-0 (7)
5. **RAUL BALBI** France 48-5-1 (33)
6. **ANGEL MANFREDY** Gary, IN 39-6-1 (29)
7. **JULIO DIAZ** Coachella, CA 24-1 (18)
8. **JUAN LAZCANO** El Paso, TX 29-2-1 (22)
9. **ARTUR GRIGORIAN** Uzbekistan 34-0 (22)
10. **ALEJANDRO GONZALEZ** Mexico 48-5-1 (33)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 130 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **ACELINO FREITAS** Brazil 31-0 (29)
2. **JOEL CASAMAYOR** Miami, FL 26-1 (16)
3. **JESUS CHAVEZ** Mexico 36-2 (25)
4. **STEVE FORBES** Las Vegas, NV 20-1 (5)
5. **YODSANAN NANTHACHAI** Thailand 36-2-1 (33)
6. **PHILLIP NDOU** South Africa 26-1 (25)
7. **CARLOS HERNANDEZ** Bellflower, CA 36-3-1 (23)
8. **JOHN BROWN** Atlantic City, NJ 23-9 (11)
9. **JORGE BARRIOS** Argentina 33-1 (24)
10. **DANIEL ATTAH** Nigeria 20-0-1 (8)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 115 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MASAMORI TOKUYAMA** North Korea 26-2-1 (7)
2. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ** Venezuela 22-0 (22)
3. **FELIX MACHADO** Venezuela 22-3-1 (11)
4. **GERRY PENALOSA** Philippines 44-4-2 (30)
5. **MARTIN CASTILLO** Mexico 21-1 (13)
6. **CELES KOBAYASHI** Japan 24-5-3 (14)
7. **PEDRO ALCAZAR** Panama 25-0-1 (14)
8. **JESUS ROJAS** Venezuela 35-9-3 (19)
9. **MAURICIO PASTRANA** Colombia 28-3 (18)
10. **IN JOO CHO** Korea 18-2 (7)

FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 112 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM** Thailand 44-2 (25)
2. **ERIC MOREL** Madison, WI 31-0 (17)
3. **IRENE PACHECO** Colombia 26-0 (20)
4. **HAWK MAKEPULA** South Africa 20-1 (13)
5. **ALEJANDRO MONTIEL** Mexico 47-3 (27)
6. **FERNANDO MONTIEL** Mexico 23-0-1 (17)
7. **SAEN SOR PLOENCHIT** Thailand 42-1 (14)
8. **MALCOLM TUNACAO** Philippines 11-1-2 (7)
9. **PETER CULSHAW** England 21-1-1 (12)
10. **GERSON GUERRERO** Mexico 24-4 (18)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 108 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **RICARDO LOPEZ** Mexico 50-0-1 (37)
2. **ROSENDO ALVAREZ** Nicaragua 31-2-1 (20)
3. **YOSAM CHOI** South Korea 24-1 (13)
4. **BEBIS MENDOZA** Colombia 28-1 (23)
5. **PICHIT SIRIWAT** Thailand 25-2 (12)
6. **NELSON DIEPPA** Puerto Rico 19-2-1 (11)
7. **JORGE ARCE** Mexico 28-3-1 (20)
8. **HIDENOBU HONDA** Japan 24-1 (12)
9. **ZOLANI PETELO** South Africa 17-3-2 (9)
10. **MELCHOR COB CASTRO** Mexico 65-8-4 (29)

STRAWWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 105 pounds

Champ: Vacant

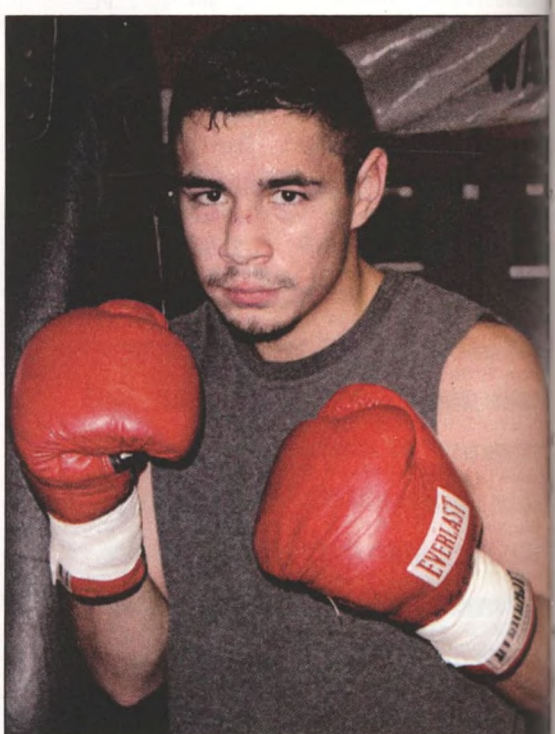
1. **JOSE AGUIRRE** Mexico 27-1-1 (17)
2. **ROBERTO LEYVA** Mexico 21-0-1 (18)
3. **CHANA PORPAOIN** Thailand 46-2-2 (17)
4. **KEITARO HOSHINO** Japan 22-7 (5)
5. **NOEL ARAMBULET** Venezuela 16-2-1 (10)
6. **JOMA GAMBOA** Philippines 31-7-1 (22)
7. **KERMIN GUARDIA** Colombia 33-2 (20)
8. **DANIEL REYES** Colombia 27-1 (21)
9. **MIGUEL BARRERA** Colombia 18-0-2 (11)
10. **KHULILE MAKEBA** South Africa 16-1 (9)

NEW FACES

OSCAR DIAZ

Junior Welterweight

By Joe Santoliquito



Oscar Diaz sat there in the metal chair and he couldn't help his mind from running, or his leg from tapping the floor in that uncontrollable way when nerves start twitching. What would he say? What excuse would he use? More importantly, *What would his father think*? Diaz sat there with his friend, two young kids being detained, because they were caught lifting a T-shirt in a mall department store.

The undercover store detective who caught little Diaz brought him in the back and called his parents—that meant Dad was coming, and Eugene Diaz was the law in his house. Getting mixed up in anything illegal was the last thing Diaz' father wanted for his son. Because Eugene Diaz grew up hard didn't mean his son had to.

"My mom can't get mad to this day, she was someone I could always talk to," recalled Diaz of the time he was caught shoplifting when he was 13. "My father is a different thing. When he's mad, he's really mad. When I got home, I probably got one of the worst beatings in my life. We don't talk about that much now. I was nervous. I didn't know what was going to happen. I got in trouble. I couldn't do anything. The only thing my father let me do was go boxing."

Oscar Diaz got scared straight off a T-shirt. He was charged with a misdemeanor and had to do community service. He had taken a two-month layoff from boxing, and it ended with this unfortunate incident. Diaz got right back into the gym to pursue a career that has since turned into something quite promising. The 5'10" junior welterweight from San Antonio, Texas, is one of the most prized prospects in Duva Boxing's growing stable of young fighters.

The 19-year-old Diaz, 7-0 (6) with 1 no-contest, has an exciting boxer-puncher style. He has power in both hands, with his left hook and his body attack his best weapons. As an amateur, Diaz was a 1999 National Junior Olympic champion and a 2000 National Golden Gloves finalist. Tommy Brooks and Courage Tshabalala have been working with Diaz, along with Hall of Fame trainer Lou Duva.

"I like Oscar's work ethic," said Tshabalala, the South African heavyweight who has worked two fights with Diaz. "He loves training

(Continued on page 9)

PRO RECORD

2001		
March 16	Johnny Joe Ramos, San Antonio, TX	KO 2
April 27	Juan Montes DeOca, Lake Tahoe, NV	KO 2
June 1	Richard Best, San Antonio	KO 1
June 17	Gonzalo Bonilla, San Antonio	KO 1
July 6	Pedro Garcia, Lake Tahoe	No-Contest 3
Aug. 25	Jonathan Nelson, San Antonio	KO 2
Nov. 2	Selson Perez, San Antonio	KO 2
2002		
Jan. 13	Jaime Morales, San Antonio	W 8

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	NO-CONTEST	KOs
8	7	0	1	6

FANTASY BOXING

www.fanaticgames.com

First Prize $500 plus a Personalized Championship Belt

How the league works: You have $1 million to spend on 10 boxers, one from each of the 10 divisions listed below. These fighters will make up your "gym". 1 in 8 guaranteed to win a prize.

1. Scoring system - every time one of your boxers:

Wins = +3 points | Wins by KO or TKO = +1 | Wins or defends title* = +1 | Fights top 10 contender* or champ* = +1
Loses = -3 points | Loses by KO or TKO = -1 | Loses title* = -1 | (* WBC, IBF and WBA**.)

Example: Bernard Hopkins KOs Felix Trinidad to defend his title. Hopkins picks up 3 points for the win, 1 for the KO, 1 for defending his title, and 1 for fighting a top 10 contender, for a total of 6 points. Trinidad loses 3 points for the loss and 1 for the KO, but gains 1 point for fighting a champ, resulting in a loss of 3 points

2. Contest begins day after entry deadline and concludes 6 months from the entry deadline, Must be 18 or older to join. Void where prohibited.

3. The gym that accumulates the most points in a given month will be awarded the monthly prize. The Cash & Belt First Prize will be awarded to the gym or gyms that accumulate the most points over the full 6 month period. Runners up will receive boxing related prizes.

**If WBA has named a "Super Champ" in a division, only that champ will be considered WBA Champ. The regular WBA champ will be considered a contender

Circle your 10 selections, 1 from each of the 10 divisions - you can spend up to $1 million

HEAVYWEIGHTS		MIDDLEWEIGHTS		WELTERWEIGHTS		LIGHTWEIGHTS		FEATHERWEIGHTS	
Byrd, C	$105,000	Betare, E	$55,000	Al, H	$40,000	Balbi, R	$80,000	Abeylan, W	$80,000
Etienne, C	$70,000	Cherifi, H	$85,000	Cintron, K	$70,000	Bojado, F	$95,000	Barrera, MA	$155,000
Grant M	$70,000	Eastman, H	$90,000	Cruz, JL	$80,000	Castillo JL	$120,000	Chacon, P	$90,000
Holyfield, E	$95,000	Echols, A	$100,000	Daamgaard, T	$90,000	Cotto, M	$90,000	Espadas, G	$80,000
Johnson, K	$100,000	Holmes, K	$90,000	Forrest, V	$145,000	Diaz, J	$95,000	Gainer, D	$110,000
Klitschko, V	$95,000	Hopkins, B	$200,000	Gatti, A	$90,000	Dorin, L	$100,000	Hamed, N	$110,000
Klitschko, W	$110,000	Joppy, W	$100,000	Gonzalez, MA	$80,000	Dunne, C	$60,000	Koshimoto, T	$70,000
Lewis, L	$130,000	Joval, R	$70,000	Holland, J	$65,000	Grigorian, A	$80,000	Marquez, J	$100,000
McCline, J	$90,000	Krajnc, A	$80,000	Jantauh, K	$85,000	Harris, V	$80,000	Maurin, P	$50,000
Moorer, M	$55,000	Mendoza, T	$85,000	Johnson, G	$85,000	Johnston, S	$100,000	Medina, M	$100,000
Oqunedo, F	$90,000	Perugino, A	$70,000	Kyvelos, H	$70,000	Lazcano, J	$100,000	Morales, E	$120,000
Rahman, H	$90,000	Reid, D	$75,000	Lewis, A	$115,000	Manfredy, A	$85,000	Polo, V	$85,000
Ruiz, J	$100,000	Rosenblatt, D	$90,000	Margarito, A	$95,000	Mayweather, F	$175,000	Sanchez, Au	$60,000
Tua, D	$75,000	Sanavia, C	$60,000	Mosley, S	$115,000	Nascimiento, X	$55,000	Seda, D	$90,000
Tyson, M	$105,000	Schenk, B	$50,000	Page, J	$85,000	Sosa, V	$75,000	Tapia, J	$110,000
Williamson, D	$50,000	Simon, H	90,000	Piccirillo, M	$85,000	Spadafora, P	$120,000	Toledo, F	$75,000
Witherspoon, T	$60,000	Trinidad, F	$110,000	Spinks, C	$90,000	Zoff, S	$70,000	Vazquez, A	$80,000

LIGHT HEAVIES		JR. MIDDLES		JR. WELTERS		JR. LIGHTS		BELOW FEATHER	
Del Valle, L	$70,000	Alexander, W	$45,000	Bailey, R	$95,000	Ari, T	$40,000	Adams, C	$90,000
Girard, B	$75,000	Bunema, A	$75,000	Camacho, Jr. H	$85,000	Attah, D	$75,000	Austin, T	$135,000
Gonzalez, J	$80,000	Castillejo, J	$85,000	Corley, D	$90,000	Baek, J	$75,000	Ayala, P	$130,000
Griffin, M	$80,000	De La Hoya, O	$160,000	Diaz, A	$85,000	Brown, J	$85,000	Hussein, H	$90,000
Hall, R	$65,000	Farnell, A	$40,000	Hatton, R	$85,000	Cassamyor, J	$100,000	Johnson, M	$90,000
Harding, E	$90,000	Hamdan, N	$70,000	Hopkins, D	$60,000	Castillo, A	$85,000	Jorrin, W	$105,000
Harmon, D	$80,000	Karmazin, R	$65,000	Hurtado,D	$80,000	Chavez, J	$95,000	Larios, O	$90,000
Johnson, R	$80,000	Lockett, G	$45,000	Judah, Z	$105,000	Forbes, S	$110,000	Lucero, E	$80,000
Jones Jr., R	$200,000	McKart, B	$100,000	Julio, E	$95,000	Freitas, A	$135,000	Machado, F	$110,000
Kelly, G	$75,000	Ouma, K	$85,000	Leija, J	$75,000	Garcia, R	$70,000	Marquez, R	$95,000
Larsen, M	$70,000	Rask, M	$50,000	Mitchell, S	$90,000	Gomez, M	$40,000	Montiel, F	$80,000
Letterlough, J	$75,000	Santos, D	$100,000	Reid, T	$60,000	Gonzalez, A	$50,000	Morales, D	$75,000
Michlczwski,D	$110,000	Simms, Tr	$80,000	Tackie, B	$90,000	Hernandez, C	$40,000	Morel, E	$130,000
Tarver,A	$90,000	Taylor, J	$85,000	Tszyu, K	$150,000	N'Dou, P	$80,000	Pacquiao, M	$110,000
Telesco	$80,000	Thiam, M	$70,000	Urkal, O	$90,000	Pearson, L	$95,000	Sanchez, Ag	$70,000
Vanderpool, S	$75,000	Vargas, F	$140,000	Ward, M	$50,000	Peden, R	$65,000	Vargas, A	$90,000
Woods, C	$85,000	Wright, R	$115,000	Williams, R	$90,000	Sim, L	$65,000	Viloria, B	$80,000

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RYAN OUT LOUD

By Jeff Ryan

THE THRILLA IN VANILLA

The principle of truth in advertising took a real shot in the jewels in March when FOX relent- lessly hyped, and then unashamedly aired, a prime time special called *Celebrity Boxing*. What's not clear, though, is which was the bigger lie: calling the show's six participants—a washed-up rapper, a couple of scandal queens, and some former child actors with rap sheets longer than Wladimir Klitschko's reach—"celebrities," or calling all the frenzied flailing, grabbing, and sucker-punching they did "boxing."

Can "reality TV" get any stupider than this? For heaven's sake, FOX's fistic foolishness made *The Osbournes* look like *Masterpiece Theater*. True celeb boxing would have featured a main event of, say, Sean Penn vs. Puff Daddy, and they would have worn eight-ounce Reyes gloves. Instead, we got figure skater Tonya Harding and bimbo Paula Jones wearing mitts the size of the pillows at The Waldorf. A true celeb undercard would have been Clint Eastwood vs. Robert Blake and Will Smith vs. Willem Dafoe. Instead, we were offered Danny Partridge vs. Greg Brady (uh, Danny Bonaduce vs. Barry Williams) and Todd Bridges, the former star of *Diff'rent Strokes*, vs. Rob Van Winkle, a.k.a. rapper Vanilla Ice.

Basketball great Chamberlain almost fought Ali in the 1960s

Just like in real boxing, the results were predictable. A fired-up Danny blasted out an out-of-shape Greg, who jiggled so much that he should have borrowed one of Marcia's bras. Bridges was able to rip Van Winkle from every angle en route to a clear-cut decision. (Never bet on the white guy, not even in *Celebrity Boxing*.) And Tonya Harding, who landed more clean shots in three rounds than Eric Harding does in 12, forced a frightened Jones to surrender in what was, even within the context of an evening this undignified, truly embarrassing fashion.

(Jones, by the way, was a last-minute sub for "Long Island Lolita" Amy Fisher, whose appearance was reportedly nixed by her parole officer. Jones, like all good journeymen, stayed in fighting shape just in case the phone rang and was rewarded with a pay-day.)

The train wreck potential of Harding-Jones was the reason your usually discriminating columnist tuned in, but it turned out to be the night's biggest disappointment. For starters, the question of whether or not Jones was going to get her nose job undone by a Harding haymaker became moot as soon as the gal

donned headgear so big that it could have protected the noggins on Mt. Rushmore. Broken nose? Hell, those helmets couldn't have been penetrated by a cruise missile, let alone a right cross.

As for the fight, well, poor Jones didn't realize that "protect yourself at all times" doesn't mean turn your back to your foe and ask for a timeout whenever you're getting hit. And clueless Harding, an asthmatic who took hits from an inhaler between rounds, didn't know that belting a fighter who has just said "no mas" is about as sportsmanlike as having some goon try to break Nancy Kerrigan's kneecap.

As if further proof was needed that the American television audience is a collection of simpletons whose standards are lower than Vanilla Ice's punch output, *Celebrity Boxing* won its time period in the Nielsen ratings, beating out NBC's *The West Wing*. But, hey, it was something fun and different, nobody got seriously hurt, we got a chance to see Ray Mancini again (he provided analysis and didn't even bleed in the process), and it didn't cost $49.95 on pay-per-view. So no harm done, right?

Wrong.

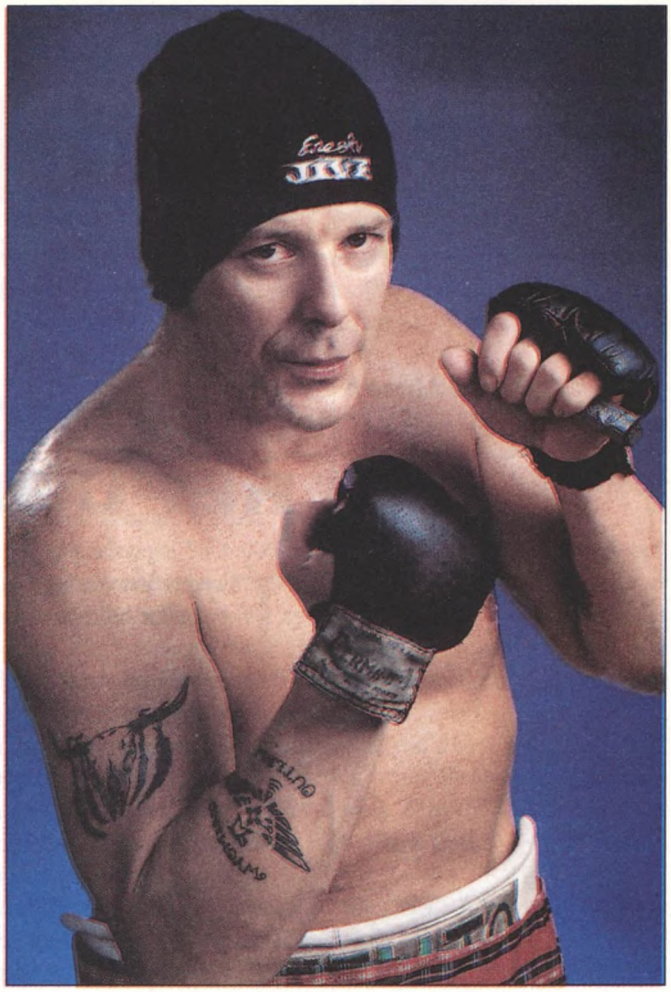
Label me a guy who's too easily offended and needs to lighten up if you'd like, but the whole exercise rankled me big time. Enough already with people using boxing as a forum for their ego gratification, experimentation, and slapstick comedy. You know what amazes me? That although the Sweet Science is a demanding pursuit that requires incredible skill, stamina, and mettle and can result in spilled blood, broken bones, and even death, so many outsiders view it as something that anyone with a jockstrap or sports bra and a little time on his or her hands can do.

This is certainly not a new phenomenon. Basketball great and megalomaniac Wilt Chamberlain nearly squared off with Muhammad Ali in The Astrodome in the '60s, even though "Wilt The Stilt" had nothing more to offer than a sizeable reach and a truckload of chutzpah. The Denver Broncos' Lyle Alzado *did* box Ali, albeit in an exhibition bout at Mile High Stadium in the '70s. And there were other NFL stars that made the move from the artificial turf to the canvas: Ed "Too Tall" Jones, Mark Gastineau, and Alonzo Highsmith. Even actor Mickey Rourke gave it a try.

To their credit, at least Jones, Gastineau, Highsmith, and Rourke fought with their mugs unprotected, their gloves small enough to not be mistaken for catcher's mitts, and their fights scheduled for longer than the time it takes to warm a couple of Pop Tarts. The has-beens on *Celebrity Boxing*, on the other hand, knew it would all be over quickly, one way or another, and that they had about as much chance of getting busted up as they did of being offered scripts. Still, it's great that Williams, Van Winkle, and Jones got enough of an ass kicking to learn that boxing is a lot harder than they thought it was.

Was this Hollywood's way of getting back at the fight game for all of those fighters who have had the nerve to think they could be actors? Or did Dick Clark, the brains (?) behind the show, just need something to keep him busy in-between New Year's Eves in Times Square? (Hey, Dick, we liked you better in the old days, when you were rating records and interviewing The Captain and Tennille.) Whatever the reason for its existence, that celebrity cheap shot-a-thon made boxing look like a bad joke.

Listen, boxing does a pretty good job of disgracing itself from time to time. A lot of its most visible figures act like cartoon characters, many of its major events end in controversy, and it is a place where the surreal is commonplace. Nonetheless, if it isn't inviting ridicule, it certainly doesn't need outsiders to come up with new ways to bring scorn upon it. Even the commercials infuriated me with their emphasis that the fights on *Celebrity Boxing* would be "real." As if, what, some boxing matches are fake? Hey, FOX, in case you haven't noticed, the fight game ain't the XFL.



Remember when actor Mickey Rourke tried pro boxing?

Pro boxing isn't deemed worthy of commercial TV slots on Saturday afternoons, let alone on Wednesday nights in prime time. But yet, there's room for this junk. And word is that Clark would like to make it a weekly series, sort of an *American Bandstand* of laughable leather launching. Now wouldn't that be wonderful?

Predictably, some uninformed talking heads on the nightly sportscast were actually citing the silly celeb card as proof of how low the sport of boxing has sunk. Do those same guys cite the decline of baseball whenever movie stars embarrass themselves in a softball game at Dodger Stadium? Or when a bunch of Wayne Gretzky wannabes from the entertainment world play bad hockey at Madison Square Garden? Of course not.

Here's an idea: If these pretentious pretenders are going to dress up like Lennox Lewis and Vernon Forrest and play combat, let them at least leave the puffy gloves and protective facemasks at home. After all, if there was a very real chance Paula Jones could have gotten her nose out of joint, maybe mine wouldn't have been so out of joint instead. ■

DIGGING DEEP

By Ivan Goldman

BOXING: A BANANA REPUBLIC

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Twenty-first century boxing is a lot like a 19th century banana republic. A few aristocrats live up on the hilltops in opulent palaces. Everybody else is down in the jungle scratching to survive.

When we hear about somebody like Fernando Vargas, who said $5-million to fight Oscar De La Hoya would be beneath his dignity, it sounds absolutely comical to the vast majority of us who will never make close to that in a lifetime of work.

Then, of course, there's rooster-collecting Roy Jones, who, when he finally got close to obtaining a career-defining fight (a rematch with Bernard Hopkins), decided he had to get 60 percent of all the kazillions on the table or he would fold the table—no deal.

It's important to remember that such sums are in no way representative of what goes on in the prize fighting business. When I first started writing about this sport, a wise, older writer told me, "There's no middle class in boxing." How right he was.

For the most part, fight people are hanging on by their fingernails. I'm not talking about people who can't afford to put in a Jacuzzi. I'm talking about people who can't pay the rent. Not just fighters. Many trainers, managers, and, yes, promoters, barely make it. They get day jobs or they starve.

Most fighters figure $5,000 is a pretty good purse for 10 rounds. They'd love to get five purses like that a year, but usually can't. Of course, they have to split with a trainer and manager, who get an even thinner slice. What kind of living is that? You can do the math.

When I started writing about this sport 10 years ago, I was shocked to find the trainer of a world titlist living like a migrant worker in a dreary little motel room. It wouldn't shock me anymore. His fighter, by the way, worked as a day laborer.

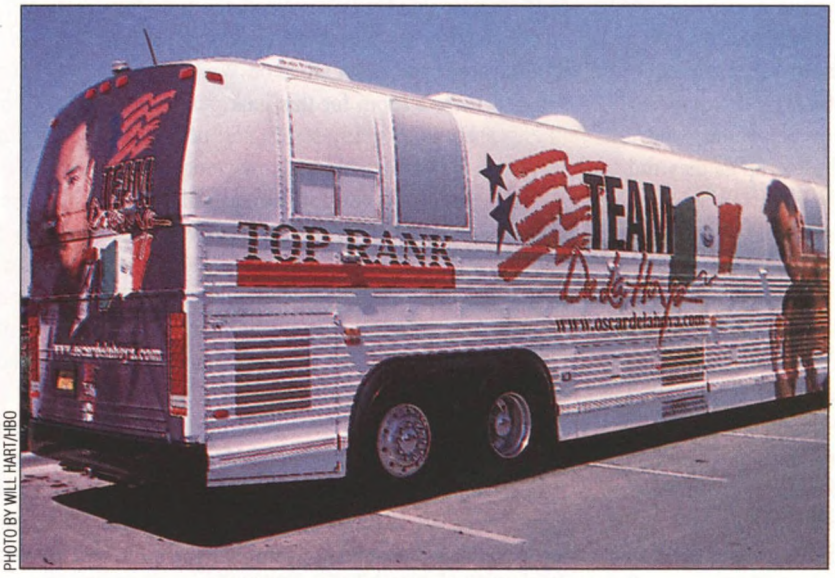


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Few fighters can afford to travel De La Hoya-style

Most of the old movies portray innocent fighters getting screwed by hard-hearted managers. There are many examples of this. But just as many delinquent or amoral fighters screw kindly handlers. They "borrow" money, steal boxing gear, and come down with temporary paralysis whenever the check comes.

Trainer-manager Blinky Rodriguez paid a promising heavyweight's rent for three years. When Blinky's son was tragically killed in a drive-by shooting in Los Angeles, he asked another manager friend to take care of his fighter for a while. Blinky never got his fighter back.

Down at the bottom, fighting for scraps, it's like Butch Cassidy's knife fight. No rules.

Frank Ronzio is a Los Angeles

Gonzalez took a pounding from Jones, but achieved liquidity

lawyer who used to manage welterweight David Kamau. He also does legal work on contracts and immigration affairs for fighters. He sees lots of fight biz paperwork.

"What happens when you get a good fighter," he told me, "is the big promoters just steal him from you."

It's impossible to earn decent purses without a major promoter, "and when they see you've got somebody good, they walk away with him," Ronzio said. "They don't get them all, but they try."

The Muhammad Ali Boxing Reform Act prevents promoters from double dipping as managers for their fighters. But it doesn't prevent their wives, children, or toadies from managing their fighters, which they do, regularly. The original manager gets left at the station. The fighter, lured away with false promises, gets kicked to the canvas by a tag-team promoter and manager, then gutted like a fish, then abandoned.

Linda Lay's husband, Ken, used to chair Enron, which is under criminal investigation for allegedly moving around some decimal points to fleece investors and its own employees out of billions. She told an interviewer that she and her hubby were "fighting for liquidity." To demonstrate their terrible deprivation, they even sold off three of their four Aspen mansions. Mrs. Lay should have been with me the night I stopped by an ex-fighter's crummy little apartment with a bit of cash I'd collected around town to get his lights turned back on.

I'm not a soft touch, but like the others who contributed, I'd seen this guy take too many punches to let him sit in the dark. I guess you could say he was fighting for liquidity, too, just like the Lays.

For every fighter like De La Hoya who signs for a million before his pro debut, or like Kostya Tszyu, who says he's never held a job, there's a truckload of kids who keep day jobs and train at night. When they have to face off against upper-crust fighters who have a platoon of cornermen, their own physical trainers, nutritionists, and paid sparring partners, the part-time fighter discovers he's just a minor ingredient in a big stew. He gets digested.

There's no magic bullet to make the financial side of boxing fair. But a good step would be a labor union for fighters and cornermen. For example, lately some networks and promoters have been leaning on fighters to prevent them from renting out their backs as billboards. That's a perfect issue for management to handle with a labor union—if there were a labor union.

The standard wage of a four-round fighter is $500. That's one forty-thousandth of the $20-million the top heavyweights can pull in. Yet it's not unusual when four-round fighters put out more effort and take more risks and punishment than some of the people on top.

At least most fighters are prepared for this kind of injustice. Over on the poor side of town, kids learn early that life is unfair. Yet despite the ridiculous finances of the sport, not all the stories down in the boxing jungle are sad.

Remember light heavyweight Julio Gonzalez? He went the distance in a losing but determined effort against Jones in Los Angeles last year. Gonzalez got that pay-per-view fight because Bob Arum spotted him on ESPN2 decisioning Julian Letterlough in an outstanding slugfest.

Gonzalez got $500,000 to fight Jones—approximately 10 percent of Jones' purse, but still $490,000 more than Gonzalez ever earned before. That 9-to-1 split is typical. Top fighters like Jones fight like hell to inflate their own purses, which is natural. But they rarely do much to help the bottom 98 percent of fighters get a rung or two up the ladder.

Gonzalez, one of the nicest people you'd ever meet, was barely making it when he got the call from Arum. He and his young family were living with his wife's parents. Now the Gonzalezes don't have to struggle quite as hard for liquidity.

HAVE SINKHOLE, WILL TRAVEL: After promoting guru Dan Goossen was finished helping America Presents' Mat Tinley lose millions in Denver, he returned to Los Angeles to form a new company, Goossen-Tutor Promotions, with Ronald Tutor, another millionaire. ■

Goossen has found another millionaire

BEING THERE

TOP RANK GYM

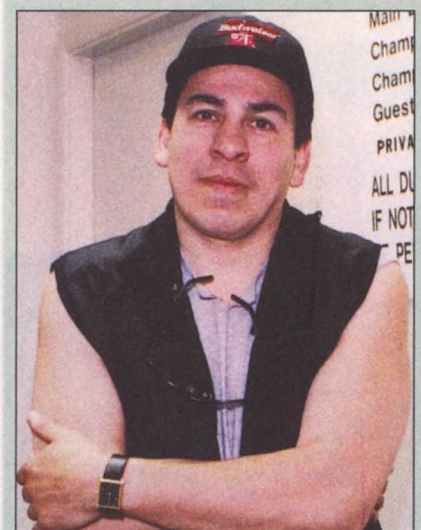
Location: 3041 Business Lane, Las Vegas, NV 89103; phone: 702-739-1501.

Directions: From McCarran International Airport, turn left onto Tropicana and go west. Make a right on Industrial and then a left onto Business Lane. The gym is on your left.

Hours of operation: The gym is open for boxers from noon to 3 p.m. or by appointment.

Who to look for: Floyd Mayweather, Roger Mayweather, Bones Adams, Erik Morales, Stevie Forbes.

Advice to greenhorns: You may not be able to go inside the gym, but that doesn't mean you can't hang around outside in hopes of meeting one of your heroes. If Top Rank has a big Vegas card upcoming in the next week, figure at least one of the stars will be doing last-minute preparations at the gym. And usually, the big stars, like Oscar De La Hoya, wait until after the gym is cleared before coming in. So to snag an autograph or a photo, plan to set up shop outside the gym around 3 in the afternoon.



Assistant manager Sandoval enforces the rules

By Kevin Iole, Photos By Chris Farina

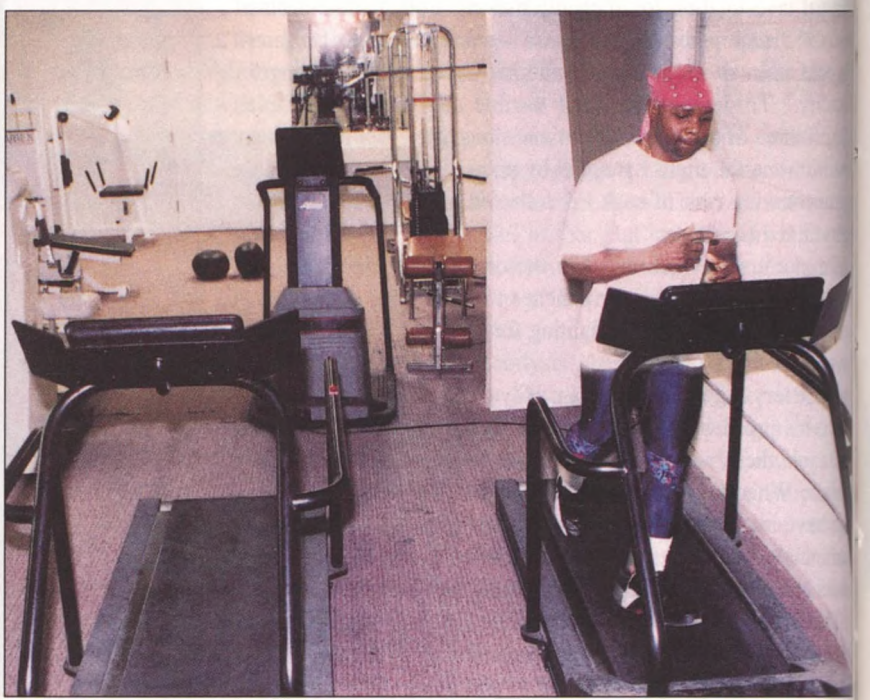
The Top Rank Gym isn't your ordinary boxing gym. Oh, sure, there are plenty of fight posters on the walls, and there are rings and heavybags and speedbags and weight machines and everything else you'd expect to find. But it's not cramped, nor is it old, nor is it rickety, nor is it on the corner of an urban residential neighborhood.

The gym is, like the promotional company that owns it, one of the biggest of its kind in the country. It is far from the stereotypical seedy little joint where the gym rats hang out and swap fight stories. In fact, it's not even open to the public, so the pictures on these pages may be the only look you ever get at the inside. This gym is not for the average Joe who wants a workout; it's a place meant to be used by the pros, a place where some of the most well-known fighters in the game will go to find work.

"Guys can come in here and get in a lot of work, because there is usually always someone who is looking for some sparring," said Richie Sandoval, the former WBA bantamweight titleholder who serves as one of the Top Rank Gym's assistant managers. "There are some good battles in here."

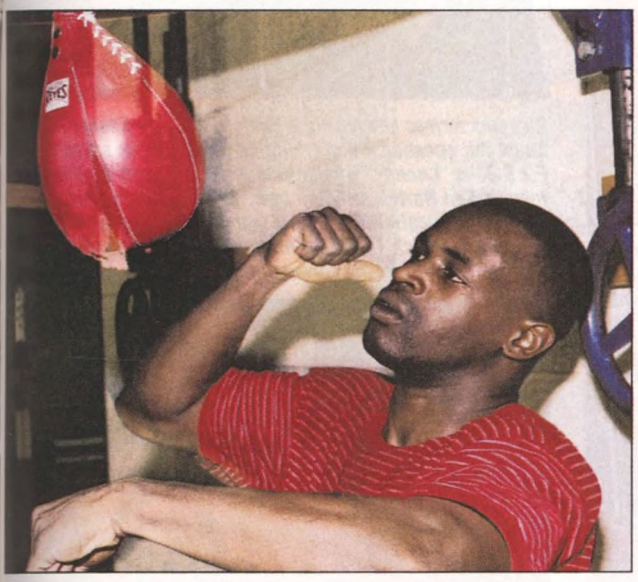
"Good battles" await beyond this doorway

The Top Rank Gym is where Lennox Lewis prepared for his ill-fated fight in South Africa with Hasim Rahman. Lewis was in Las Vegas filming the movie



Cabian St. Pierre, a sparring partner of Floyd Mayweather's, goes for a jog

Roger Mayweather holds the pads for IBF 130-pound titlist Stevie Forbes in one of the gym's spacious rings



Junior lightweight Adarryl Johnson gets his timing down

Welterweight contender Kofi Jantuah blasts the bag

Ocean's Eleven prior to the fight and used the gym to prepare. Or, as some who were there would tell it, he used the gym to act as if he prepared.

Many of the greats of the game have, at one time or another, laced them up and gotten into one of the rings in the Top Rank Gym to prepare. Legends like Ray Leonard, Thomas Hearns, and Roberto Duran have made the trek, as have current stars such as Wladimir Klitschko and Floyd Mayweather.

It's not the type of gym that will remind one of one of the gyms in *Rocky*, but that doesn't matter to those who are getting ready for battle.

"They like coming here because it's big and clean and they have everything they need, including their privacy," Sandoval said. "They can get work, but it's not like there is always dozens of people in there watching and seeing what they're doing. It's a business place."

The Top Rank Gym isn't the stuff of legends, like Gleason's in New York or even Johnny Tocco's Ringside Gym across town in Las Vegas, because it doesn't have the old-school ambience that those gyms have. But it does quite well the one thing that it's supposed to do: It gives fighters their best opportunity to come into the ring in shape and ready to go to war.

"This is a fighter's place," Sandoval said. "If you want to fight, this is the kind of place you're looking to come to to get ready." ■

CAMERA CLICKS

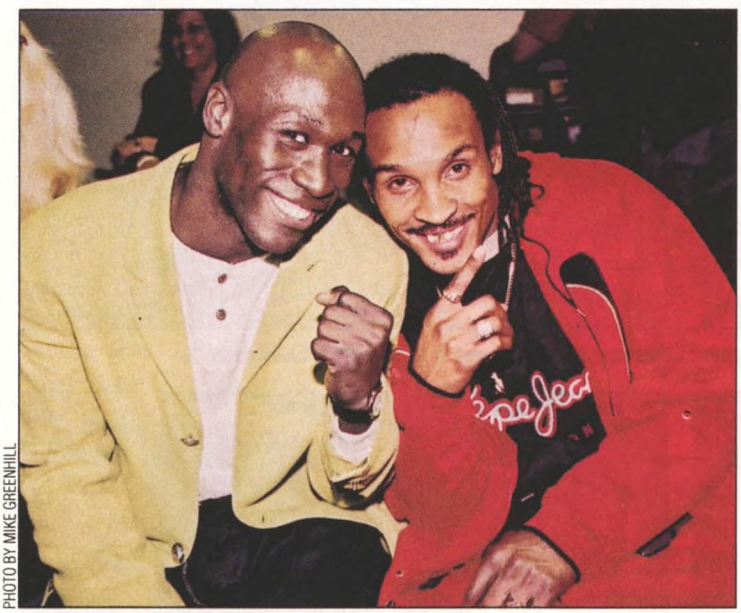


PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

Before you start wondering why THE RING would run a picture of Michael Jordan and Snoop Doggy Dogg, take a closer look. These are junior welterweight contenders DeMarcus Corley and Randall Bailey, occasional sparring partners and potential future rivals, hanging out at the Sovereign Center in Reading, Pennsylvania.

PHOTO BY BRIAN CANNON/DKP

Hey, hey, hey! It's fat Albert! Albert Stewart, to be precise, all 327 pounds of him. Stewart, who at least did us the courtesy of tucking his gut into his trunks (and thank goodness we can't see what's tucked or untucked on the other side), was a third-round knockout victim against Josue Blocus on Don King's March 30 card in Reading.

PHOTO BY MARK W. HILL

It seems former heavyweight contender Gerry Cooney misunderstood the question when young Emanuel Taylor asked him what F.I.S.T. is. Cooney, whose fists once flattened such formidable foes as Ken Norton and Ron Lyle, now contributes his time to an organization called F.I.S.T. (Fighters Initiative for Support and Training), which helps ex-boxers make the transition to new careers after their ring careers end.

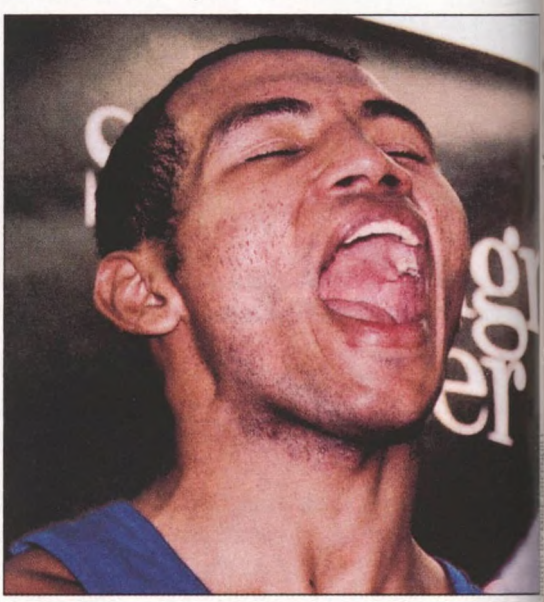
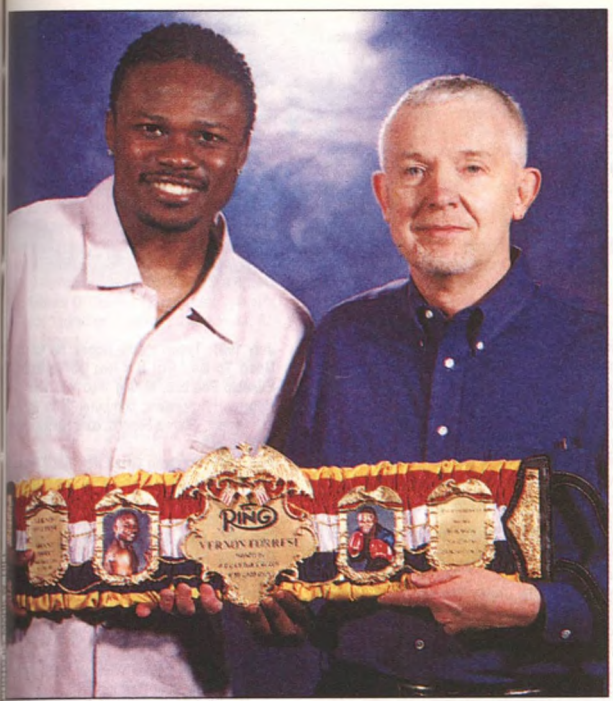


PHOTO BY BRIAN CANNON/DKP

What is there to do after chugging a beer, but belch? Exciting new WBA welterweight titlist Ricardo Mayorga, who downed a cold one after turning Andrew Lewis into a cold one, is one of boxing's most colorful characters. Expect to see more of him in "Camera Clicks" in the future.



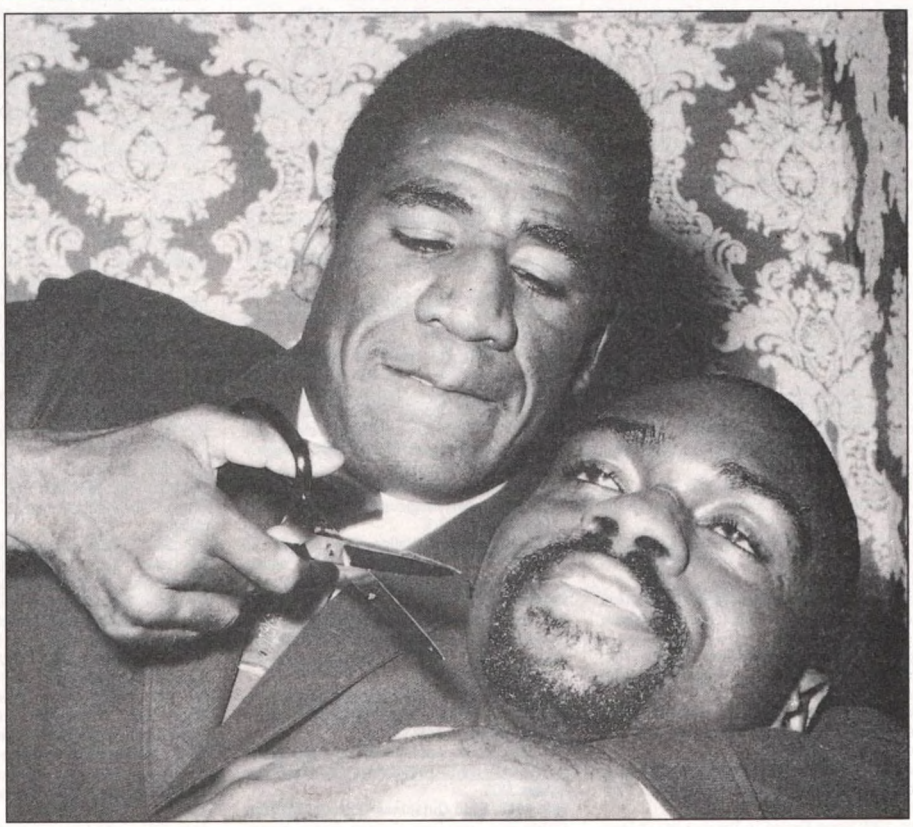
Welterweight champion Vernon Forrest receives THE RING belt from Editor-in-Chief Nigel Collins at a New York City photo shoot. Forrest was the first 147-pound champion to be given THE RING championship belt since Lloyd Honeyghan in 1986.

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Double Don: There are probably a lot of people who'd like to see Don King on the canvas, but this isn't exactly what they had in mind.

We're not sure if junior welterweight Matt Hill found the venue a bit chilly or was preparing for a quick getaway. Either way, he was covered, as opponent Kendall Holt turned the heat up with a second-round TKO and sent Hill home early.

NOSTALGIA CORNER



"He holds the scissors up to my throat, and I'm the one who ends up going to jail?" That's middleweight Rubin "Hurricane" Carter being held in a precarious position by Luis Rodriguez prior to their first fight, in 1965 at Madison Square Garden. As it turned out, Rodriguez didn't need any sharp objects; he beat Carter in both of their meetings using only the blunt ones at the ends of his arms.

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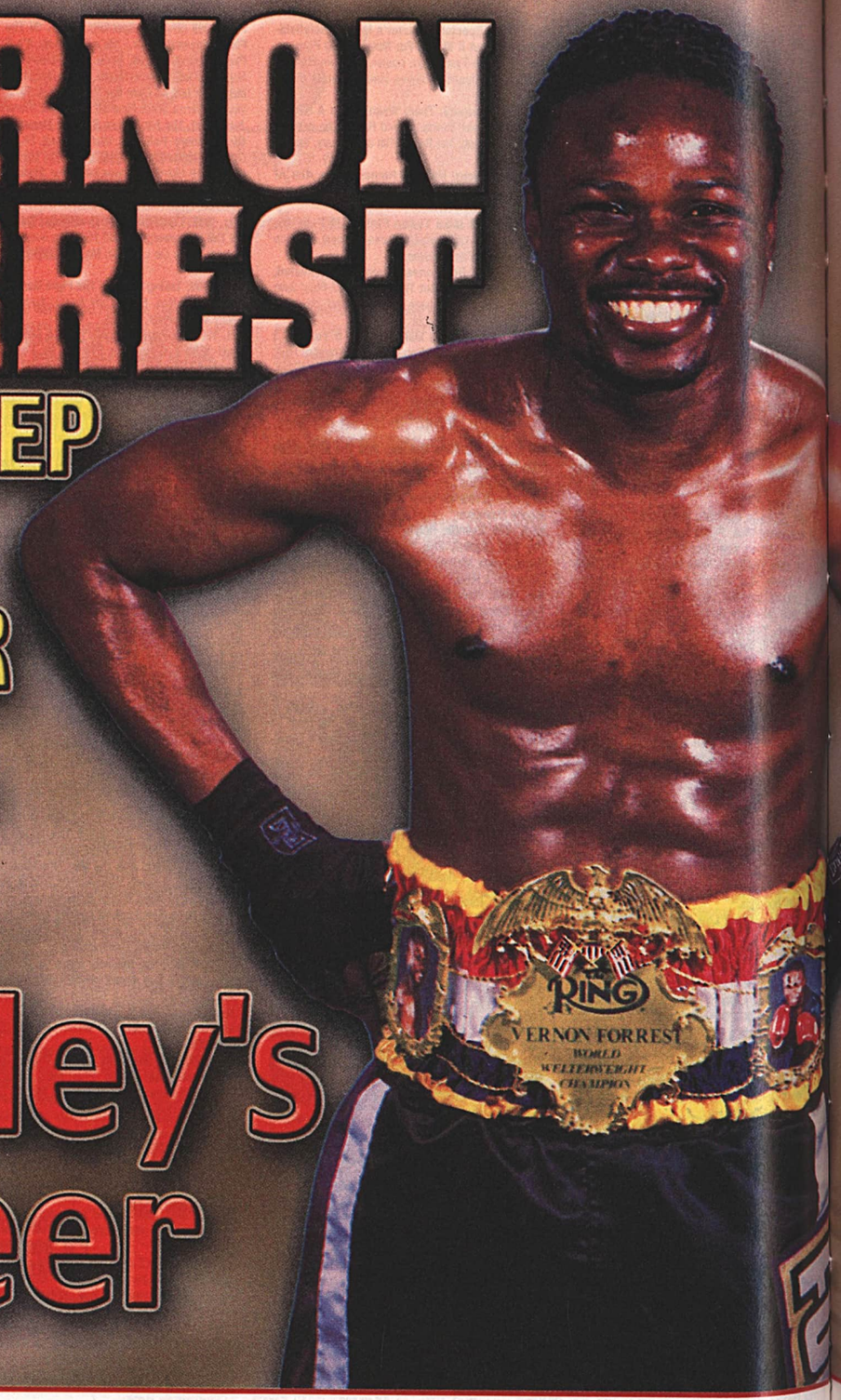
VERNON FORREST

NEXT STEP IN THE MASTER PLAN ... End Mosley's Career



Shane Mosley runs into a left hook from Forrest during their January 2002 battle for welterweight supremacy. The upset victory thrust Forrest into the spotlight after years of virtual obscurity and earned him THE RING's recognition as world welterweight champion.

PHOTO BY JESSE D. GARRABRANT/GETTY IMAGES

PHOTO BY MARK W. HILL

By Nigel Collins

Vernon Forrest looked at himself in the bathroom mirror, adjusted THE RING championship belt around his waist, and announced himself ready for this issue's cover shoot.

"You look like one of those old-time fighters," someone remarked.

"I am an old-time fighter," Forrest replied, pleased to be compared with the great fighters from the past who have worn the same belt. "Right now, I'm fighting for history. I need to know at the end of the day that I did everything I could to reach my ultimate goal, which is the Hall of Fame."

Forrest took a major step toward his objective in January, beating Shane Mosley for the world welterweight title. But even though most considered his one-sided victory over the previously undefeated Mosley a huge accomplishment, Forrest knows better.

For much of his 30 years, Forrest has been able to look beyond the immediate and see the big picture. This ability has helped him become not only the fighter he is, but also somebody who knows that winning a world championship isn't really such a big deal in the overall scope of things.

"Man, you all don't see what I see," said Forrest. "For me to tie my shoe is nothing. But tying your shoe is a major accomplishment for some of the people I'm working with. For them, it's like winning the title."

The people Forrest is talking about are his clients at Destiny's Child, a group home for individuals with mental disabilities. Forrest doesn't just donate his time and money to Destiny's Child; he's founder and co-owner. And for the first three years it was up and running, he lived in the same home that housed his clients, experiencing Destiny's Child—in the trenches, day and night, up close an oh-so personal.

"We house people with mental disabilities," said Forrest. "They range from 14 to 67 years old. Most of them have been abused and are outcasts. Even their families don't want to get with them. We try to instill self-esteem and integrate them back into society. We teach them motor skills, job skills. Some of them go to school."

It seems a bit incongruous at first, a world champion taking on such a demanding job outside of boxing. After all, we're not talking about running a restaurant or gym. We're talking about hands-on coping with some of society's most needy individuals. But as Forrest began to tell the tale of Destiny's Child, it all started to make sense. Even the part about how helping others helped him become a better fighter.

It wasn't an overpowering altruistic urge to assist others that got Forrest started, however. He just wanted something better than what he saw around him, and was smart enough to know that if he wanted to escape the cycle of poverty and disenchantment, he had to have a plan.

"My whole life has always been a game plan," said Forrest. "When I was nine years old and first walked into the gym, I knew I was going to be a boxer. I knew that that was what I wanted to do for the rest of my life. But at school they said, 'What are you going to fall back on if your boxing career don't work out?'"

Unlike so many boxers, Forrest had an answer. It was all part of the plan.

PHOTO BY JIMMY CARTER

Forrest poses with Destiny's Child co-owner Toy Johnson (wearing white suit) and some of their clients at the group home for people with mental disabilities. The boxer's work with Destiny's Child has helped him understand what's really important.

"I was going to make money in boxing, and take that money and develop Vernon Forrest Enterprises, which would be a collection of businesses. I didn't know exactly what businesses they were going to be, but I knew I was going to be in business. I just knew I was going to be a business mogul."

Lots of poor kids dream big; it's one of the few luxuries available to them. But only a precious few succeed to the degree Forrest has, especially on two arduous fronts simultaneously. Forrest was driven by forces he only half understands. It's been that way since he was a boy with a dream so large, it's a wonder it could fit into his skinny little body.

"In everything I do, I have to do it best," he explained. "If I can't be the best, I don't want to do it. Coming up, I always knew that in order for me to be successful, rise above where I was at, I had to work twice as hard as everybody else. I was always playing catch-up. I wasn't the smartest kid in school, so I had to work harder. I don't think I was blessed with the best athletic ability, so I had to work harder. I felt I had to work harder than anybody else."

For as long as he could remember, Forrest had watched his mother toiling long hours for short pay, and heard his brothers, sisters, and others complain about their jobs. But he would be different. He had a plan.

It's funny how things work out. Maybe Destiny's Child wouldn't have become a reality if Forrest had won a gold medal at the 1992 Olympics. With gold around his neck, he'd also probably have a million-dollar signing bonus in his pocket, and it's not uncommon for old dreams to be forgotten during a rocket ship ride to fame and fortune. But Oscar De La Hoya was the only American boxer to return home from the Barcelona Games with a gold medal. Forrest lost his first Olympic bout and any chance of receiving the sort of promotional support that put De La Hoya on the fast track to superstardom. If he was going to make it, he'd have to do it the hard way.

In November '92, Forrest turned pro and began what has been, by today's standards, a prolonged climb to his current status as a legitimate world champion and budding attraction. That 10-year odyssey has been accompanied, and to no small degree aided, by the parallel journey of Destiny's Child.

After the cover shoot, as his limo made its way through the crowded streets of Manhattan on its way to HBO's offices, Forrest looked out the window and recalled a pivotal time in his life. He clearly enjoys the added attention his victory over Mosley has garnered, but isn't about to forget where he came from and how he got to where he is today.

"The two years I spent at Northern Michigan University on a boxing scholarship changed my life," said Forrest. "Back home, I was used to being surrounded by people who failed, who dropped out. But in Michigan I was placed in a setting where people succeeded. I didn't want to be the stereotypical jock, so I hit the books hard."

"Vernon went to school day and night," confirmed Al Mitchell, head boxing coach at NMU's U.S. Olympic Education Center. "He really put his best foot forward. I told him when he first got here that he could let the system use him, or he could use the

system. And he turned out just the way you want every fighter in the program to turn out. I remember sometimes, when it was raining and I gave the other guys the day off, Vernon would go running anyway."

Mitchell also remembers the lean years when both fighter and trainer were so short of cash that they'd collect soda cans in order to have enough money for pizza.

"We still laugh about that," said Mitchell, who currently co-trains Forrest, along with Ronnie Shields.

Forrest isn't collecting cans anymore. The business administration courses Forrest took at Northern Michigan University gave him the formal knowledge he'd need to launch Vernon Forrest Enterprises. And when his boxing career failed to accelerate quickly enough to satisfy his need to excel, he put the "fallback" portion of his game plan in motion.

"Financially and mentally, I took myself away from boxing and devoted my energies into being successful in the business world," he said. "I transferred my competitiveness in boxing to business."

Prior to founding Destiny's Child, Forrest had been volunteering at a group home run by another organization, but he felt they could do a better job. So he decided to do it himself.

"Once I decided I wanted to do it myself, I got a couple of partners to go in with me. I went to class and studied around the clock. We put together a business plan from scratch, and bought an empty house in suburban Atlanta. We gutted the house, fixed it up, and moved in. After we were licensed, we started getting kids from the Department of Human Resources."

It wasn't easy, especially at first, and it wasn't long before Forrest understood that there was a huge difference between book knowledge and practical application. Except when he was training or away at a fight, he was with his clients 24 hours a day, seven days a week. All of them had serious problems.

"These are people who nobody had faith in, but we believed in them, and because we believed in them and worked so hard with them, they are overcoming obstacles by leaps and bounds.

"We had one client who was a barbarian. He was 21 years old, but would eat off the floor. When we first got him, he was in diapers. They said he would never be able to communicate. But now he's talking and we're looking into possibly getting him some employment."

His clients call him "Uncle Vernon," and when he's not on the road, Forrest visits with each of them every day. Most know he's a boxer.

"They say, 'Uncle Vernon, we saw you on TV, and you did good,'" said Forrest, smiling.

In the five years since its birth, Destiny's Child has grown from one group home to eight, with four more due to open this summer. The venture has not only been a success, it has provided Forrest with the financial security and inspiration to flourish as a boxer. The income meant that he wasn't forced to take fights on short notice just to pay the bills, and his day-to-day association with his clients put boxing into a clearer perspective.

"It's God's blessing," he said of the lessons he's learned and the satisfaction he's derived from Destiny's Child. "To me, it's the greatest feeling. It's a better

PHOTO BY JIMMY CARTER

Some say you can never go home again, but after winning the IBF welterweight belt, Forrest returned to the Chafee Park Gym in Augusta, Georgia, where he began his boxing career at the age of nine. Forrest says he knew he wanted to be a fighter the first day he walked into the gym.

feeling than anything, because you're helping people that other people have given up on.

"People ask me all the time, 'How come you're so patient? How come you don't let stuff bother you?' They don't understand what my clients go through. So this is nothing. This boxing stuff is like sleepwalking in comparison.

"The people we house at Destiny's Child are the main reason I stayed in boxing. We're talking about people who have been told they would never amount to anything. Well, I've been told I wouldn't amount to anything. Seeing what our clients can accomplish motivated me not to give up."

In his ninth year as a pro, the undefeated Forrest finally got an opportunity to fight for a title, albeit the IBF welterweight version, which Felix Trinidad had abandoned when he beat David Reid for the WBA super welter belt. But Forrest's August 2000 bout with Raul Frank ended in disappointment when an accidental clash of heads resulted in a bloody no-contest. He easily decisioned Frank the following May to claim the alphabet belt, but it wasn't much of a fight, and nobody really took much notice. It wasn't until he upset Mosley that Forrest finally found himself where he'd always dreamed of being since the first day he walked into the Chafee Park Gym.

So what if it didn't all fall into place exactly the way he envisioned it as a kid? The game plan is finally coming together—just like he always knew it would. Vernon Forrest Enterprises now includes a record label, and will soon branch out into real estate and luxury homes.

The contract for a rematch with Mosley was still being hammered out when Forrest met with THE RING in early-April, and the can-collector-turned-business-mogul was driving a hard bargain.

"When it comes to negotiations, if it's not right, I'll walk away from the table," he insisted.

Still, the businessman in Forrest is smart enough to know that no other fight, right now, will bring him as rich a purse as another bout with Sugar Shane. Whatever the size the check eventually turns out to be, it will be the largest of his career to date.

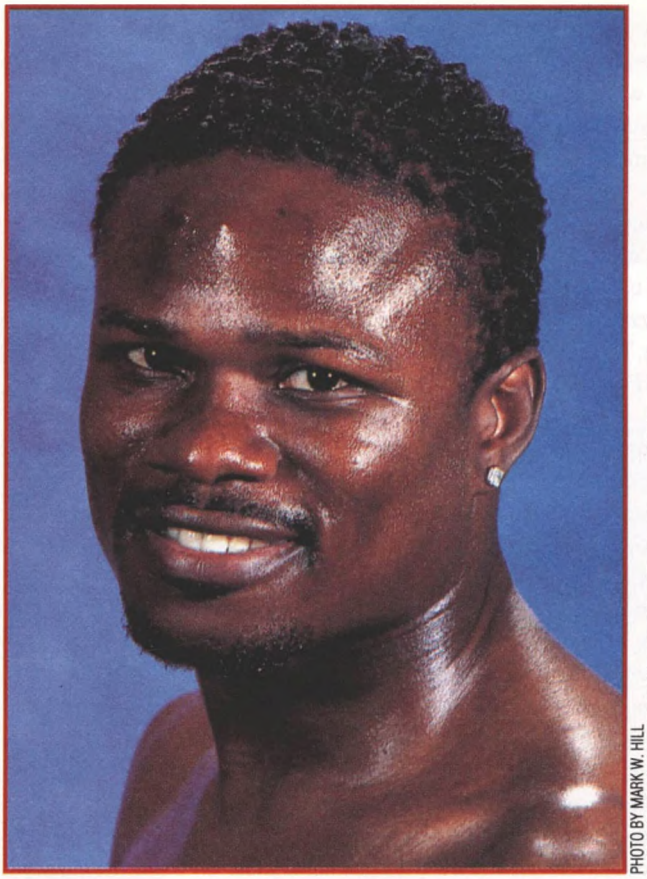


PHOTO BY MARK W. HILL

Beneath Forrest's ready smile and mild-mannered demeanor is a highly motivated and complex individual.

"I never made no money in this game, not no real big money," said Forrest. "This promotion will put me and my family in a very comfortable position."

Forrest's success in the ring and his work with Destiny's Child hasn't taken the edge off him in any way. Far from it. Despite his mild demeanor and ever-ready smile, you can sense dissatisfaction and a churning need to continually prove himself bubbling just below the surface. The game plan still isn't perfect.

For starters, he's peeved at Mosley, and it's not just about one-upmanship at the bargaining table. Forrest is aggravated that Mosley is now saying the clash of heads that preceded the two knockdowns in the second round probably did more damage than the ensuing right hands that put him down.

And that's not all. The CEO of Vernon Forrest Enterprises is also smarting from what he perceives as a media snub leading up to the Mosley first fight. Together they combine to fuel him for th rematch.

"That win [over Mosley] wa so big because of the naysayer all the people who had me thi sheep in a pack of wolves," sai Forrest, strong emotion creepin into his voice for the first tim that afternoon. "Here I was a elite fighter. I was an Olympian Just because I hadn't been on T all that much doesn't mean I can' fight. All that negativity goin into the fight was my motivation.

"So when I got Mosley hurt, I could have knocked him out a couple of times. But I didn't wan to knock him out. I wanted to pun ish him. I didn't want people t say I got a lucky punch in. No, no no. It wasn't going to be like that It was going to be a complete domination. I let him survive because I knew we were going t fight again. Now there's nothin left but to knock him out and en his career."

Harsh words coming from somebody dedicated to helping others, but that's just another facet of the complicated man who is Vernon Forrest.

Mitchell, who was instrumental in bringing Forrest to Northern Michigan University, recalls that when the fighter decided to relocate as a teenager, he'd had a falling out with his old trainer back in Augusta. Things got nasty, and it left a mark on the young amateur.

"I think one of the reasons he worked so hard to succeed here was that he thought he couldn't go back home," said Mitchell.

Maybe that's why Forrest chose to establish Destiny's Child in the Atlanta area, instead of Augusta. But regardless of what's at the root of his smoldering ambition, Forrest intends to ride it to the max.

"All I'm striving to be now is one of the best fighters in history," said Forrest. "My true aim is to become one of the guys they talk about forever."

Whether or not the final piece of Forrest's grand scheme will one day fall into place remains to be seen. But with everything he's accomplished so far, he's clearly a child of destiny in his own right.■

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From Superstar To Super Promoter

CAN SUGAR RAY TAKE BOXING TO THE NEXT LEVEL?

PHOTOS BY LARA STUART REBNEY

By Johnnie Whitehead

There's a perception that boxing promoters are much like pimps. The only difference being that promoting fights is legal. But there are those who would like nothing more than to change that perception.

For almost a year, Sugar Ray Leonard has been strolling down sport's fabled red light district, hoping to draw positive attention to the game he once gracefully ruled with his flashing fists and dazzling smile. And in that relatively short period of time, Sugar Ray Leonard Boxing has already earned a reputation for staging competitive and entertaining fights on ESPN2.

"He's doing real well with arenas and putting on very solid matches," said ESPN's program director for boxing, Bob Yalen. "Our sales guys like him because he makes appearances for us. He doesn't automatically go right for a casino. Ray likes venues and goes from there. Look what happened in Buffalo."

What happened was Leonard's most noteworthy promotion to date. Local prospect Joe Mesi may be an unproven heavyweight, but he has what television wants: a glossy 22-0 (20) record, a likable personality, and an action style. Mesi admits he still has a ways to go before he can be taken as a serious title threat, but for the 9,554 hometown fans that filled the Alumni Arena on the University of Buffalo campus, none of that mattered. "Baby Joe" was their man and they gobbled up all the tickets.

"It took us two years to put together a company that could really take boxing to the next level," said Leonard, alluding to his partner, CEO Bjorn Rebney. "We've done that and much more. The fact is that on ESPN2 we've built up a following already because of the ratings we've been doing."

Leonard made a positive statement with his first card for the network last August, which featured Angel Manfredy against Lamar Murphy in Yakama, Washington. On the same ticket was light heavyweight

Rebney and Leonard had a box-office smash in April, drawing a capacity crowd of almost 10,000 to the "Buffalo Blast," featuring undefeated local heavyweight "Baby Joe" Mesi. The popular slugger stopped Keith McKnight in the sixth-round (right) to run his record to 22-0 (20).

Did you ever hear the one about the ex-champ who thought he could become a promoter? Rebney and Leonard have been working with one another for a number of years and have a great rapport.

contender Antonio Tarver facing Chris Johnson. Both were quality matchups worth watching. It was a successful gate, too, which has accentuated Leonard's standing with ESPN2 because a full house is good television, though the network doesn't reap direct benefits from ticket sales.

"I will go into a city six days or a week in advance and really saturate the market and promote the fight," said Leonard, who was taking a much-needed vacation in Hawaii when he spoke with THE RING in early-April. "I do it in such a way that when we're there that's all you hear about and it becomes subliminal. I take the boxers to the public by going to the favorite eating spot, or by staging a mock weigh-in. That makes a difference. What you're doing is building caring fans, and caring fans are the best fans to have."

Still, there are detractors. Television dates are a premium and competing for them can be cutthroat among promoters. Though most are reluctant to publicly criticize Leonard, there's an undercurrent of dissension. Some promoters gripe that he has used his name recognition, crossover appeal, and corporate connections to get the upper hand. That he hasn't really earned it. That would appear to be a shortsighted position, however, because if mainstream attention and advertising can be brought back to the sport, it would benefit everyone in the long run.

"I realize not too many promoters are happy about Ray Leonard being on our network, and that some are saying he's not paid his dues," said Yalen. "Why do you have to pay your dues? Ray paid his dues in the ring."

Leonard is oblivious to the acrimony. He credits his fast start to having good working relationships with the likes of Bob Arum, Don King, Lou Duva, and Main Events.

Though King and Arum have been th primary forces in the sport for decade they can't rule forever. That's whe Leonard and Rebney see an opportunity.

"Over the last 15 or 20 years, boxing ability to draw general market fans an advertising support has really dwindled said Rebney, who handled Oscar De L Hoya's marketing in the mid-1990s. "Yo look at boxing at its best—De La Hoya Mosley, Tyson-Holyfield, Trinidad-De L Hoya—and you see everyone from ever socio-economic field. When it's done right, everybody responds. Doesn't matte who you are, where you're from, or how much you make. That has to be recaptured more than once or twice a year."

But every joyride comes with its share of potholes and speed bumps. In the day preceding Mesi's sixth-round knockout o Keith McKnight on the *Friday Night Fights*, there were accusations of false advertising. According to Tim Graham of the *Buffalo News:*

•Residents of the Buffalo area were told in radio advertisements that the fight would be blacked out if it wasn't a sellout something that ESPN2 never intended to do, since the live gate is of no financial consequence to the network.

•There was a mock weigh-in at a local car dealership that sponsored the event, but according to the *Buffalo News,* it was advertised as the official weigh-in, which angered the New York commission. Rebney claims they've always staged "ceremonial" weigh-ins to boost the promotion. "It's an opportunity for fighters to sign autographs, shake hands, meet kids, and generate excitement for the event," he said. The athletic commission turned over that information to the state attorney general's office.

•McKnight was billed as the WBC Intercontinental heavyweight champion and listed as such in promotional material. Despite the fact that such a designation means nothing, McKnight hadn't held or defended the belt for several years.

Rebney refutes the claims made by the *Buffalo News*, and said a request was put in for a blackout, but that a six-week window was needed. Yalen says it was never considered and that Leonard never mentioned anything about a blackout to the public. He lays the blame on Mesi's father, Jack, for having that disseminated through the radio spots. "I told them to get

those things off the air," said Yalen.

"We didn't envision a total sellout, so we were discussing the possibility of a blackout in a certain radius," said Leonard. "All of a sudden we sold the sucker out, so we didn't need it. It was such small potatoes to me."

On a broad scale, such accusations—true or not—are just that. Far worse "trickerations" have been played on an unsuspecting boxing public, but since Leonard's promotional mantra is based on a squeaky clean image, he will be held accountable to make sure his organization lives up to its reputation. Such a cosmetic blemish will fade in the long run if he continues on his current path.

The success Leonard has had has been somewhat of a surprise because when he formed a management company several years ago, he didn't fare as well. He admits his heart wasn't in that earlier venture, and that he was preoccupied with himself and not the careers of his clients, such as promising junior welterweight DeMarcus "Chop Chop" Corley. Corley said he had little or no contact with Leonard as he languished for the four years, from 1996-2000. He didn't move up in the IBF rankings, despite having one of the organization's regional titles that was supposed to lead to a world title shot.

"I was not really involved. I was somewhat ambiguous as far as my own career," Leonard admitted. "My own energies were focused on who should I fight when I come back. Back then I was still in my mid-30s and I was still contemplating fighting again. I felt that wasn't my niche and I needed something that could really have impact. As a promoter you have more control of what happens."

Leonard promoted Manfredy, but their relationship fell apart before the veteran lightweight challenged IBF beltholder Paul Spadafora on HBO earlier this year. Yvette Manfredy, who manages her husband, said the fight was allowed to go to purse bid and that Leonard didn't show up. Instead of making $400,000, as it had been negotiated with Leonard and the network, her husband was paid only $110,000, when Spadafora's promoter, Mike Acri, staged the event. The Manfredys, however, do not fault Leonard.

(Continued on page 38)

Leonard and Rebney arrive at the venue in Yakama, Washington, where they promoted the Angel Manfredy-Lamar Murphy fight. Come fight time, all the empty seats were filled with paying customers.

Sugar Ray Leonard

(Continued from page 37)

"Sugar is good people with me," Angel said. "No way we were taking Sugar to court."

Said Yvette: "I think they didn't want him involved in the fight."

Who exactly she was referring to as "they" was not clear, but it appears "they" better get used to Leonard's presence. His one-year deal with ESPN2 for 12 fight dates officially ends in August, but an extension is being negotiated, as he has dates lined up through December.

"Things do surface and you wonder where it originated from," said Leonard, who along with Rebney downplays such talk. "But we've always gotten through it."

The fistic career of the 45-year-old Leonard is over, and he appears content with his new role that affords him the spotlight and control without getting punched in the mouth. He'll host blackjack tournaments at casinos during the week. He'll watch his middleweight title fight with Marvin Hagler with a captive audience and explain what was happening for the umpteenth time. Whatever it takes to increase the casino drop and put fannies in seats come fight night, Leonard will do.

"Ray Leonard, along with George Foreman, are the two best ambassadors in boxing because they carry themselves with class and dignity," said Top Rank publicist Lee Samuels. "We've used Ray in recent promotions. He can elevate the pay-per-view cards just by his presence."

Leonard still does motivational speaking for Fortune 500 companies, and recently shared a dinner table with former South African President Nelson Mandela and his grandchildren. He signs autographs in his sleep, and he's posed for more pictures than a *Playboy* centerfold. Not many professional sports stars can still command such respect after their careers are through. Maybe it's because after all these years, Leonard, unlike many of today's self-absorbed stars, has retained the common touch. Heck, he doesn't even speak of himself in the third person.

"If he does well, we do well," said Samuels. "We wish all our boxers could do this well. He's still learning as a promoter. It looks like he's going to make it. The secret of good promoting is having a top staff with you. He's building that. Your matchmakers are your lifeblood [Leonard's is Ron Katz]. I don't care if it's Don King or Bob Arum or Ray Leonard."

Leonard currently has eight fighters under contract, most notably IBF cruiserweight titleholder Vassily Jirov, whom they would love to match with light heavyweight champion Roy Jones. He also has

Still as popular today as when he was fighting, the 45-year-old Leonard soaks up the cheers from an admiring crowd in Miami. He does a tremendous job of hyping his shows, spending approximately a week in town prior to an event.

junior welterweight contender Diobelys Hurtado, former bantamweight titlist John Michael Johnson, and welterweight prospect Paul "The Punisher Williams, who is 16-0 (13).

"There's a perception that personalities just use their name and sit back, and that they have no interest in being involved in the business of the sport," said Leonard. "With me, it's just the opposite. I've done it all. The workload involved is incredible. This is like an extenuation of my legacy."

The only prerequisite Leonard has for using or signing a fighter is that fighter's willingness to be evenly matched. A perfect example of that was the super middleweight thriller between Omar Shieka and Thomas Tate in Philadelphia last October, perhaps the best scrap SRL Boxing has promoted so far.

"We have advanced a lot faster than we had anticipated," Leonard said.

The ultimate goal, of course, is to move on to bigger shows and find that next superstar, wherever he is. He might be simmering on some other promoter's backburner the way Shane Mosley and Felix Trinidad did for so long before exploding into the spotlight. He might not even be a professional yet.

It doesn't take a genius to put on good shows. There's no secret formula other than having a competent staff and fighters who are willing and able to step up.

"Here's how simple it is," said J Russell Peltz, a Philadelphia-based promoter who serves as a consultant to ESPN2 and has been in the business for 33 years. "The promoter has to want to make a good fight. The bad ones just want to get their fighters wins. You have to put the fight ahead of the fighter."

On that count, Leonard is already making it look easy. The streaking Johnson was recently upset by Oscar Leon, and if the Jones-Jirov fight is made, Leonard's man will undoubtedly be the underdog. But beyond making the sort of matches fans want to see, Leonard and Rebney appear to have a fighting chance of improving boxing's tattered image. And if they can do that, it could help the sport just as much, if not more so, than anything Leonard accomplished between the ropes. ■

Johnnie Whitehead is an editor for USA Today and a regular contributor to this magazine.

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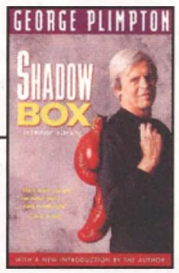

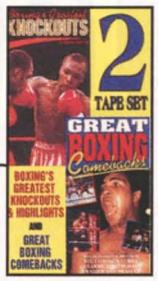

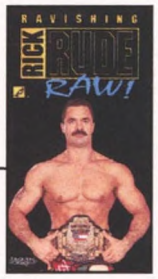

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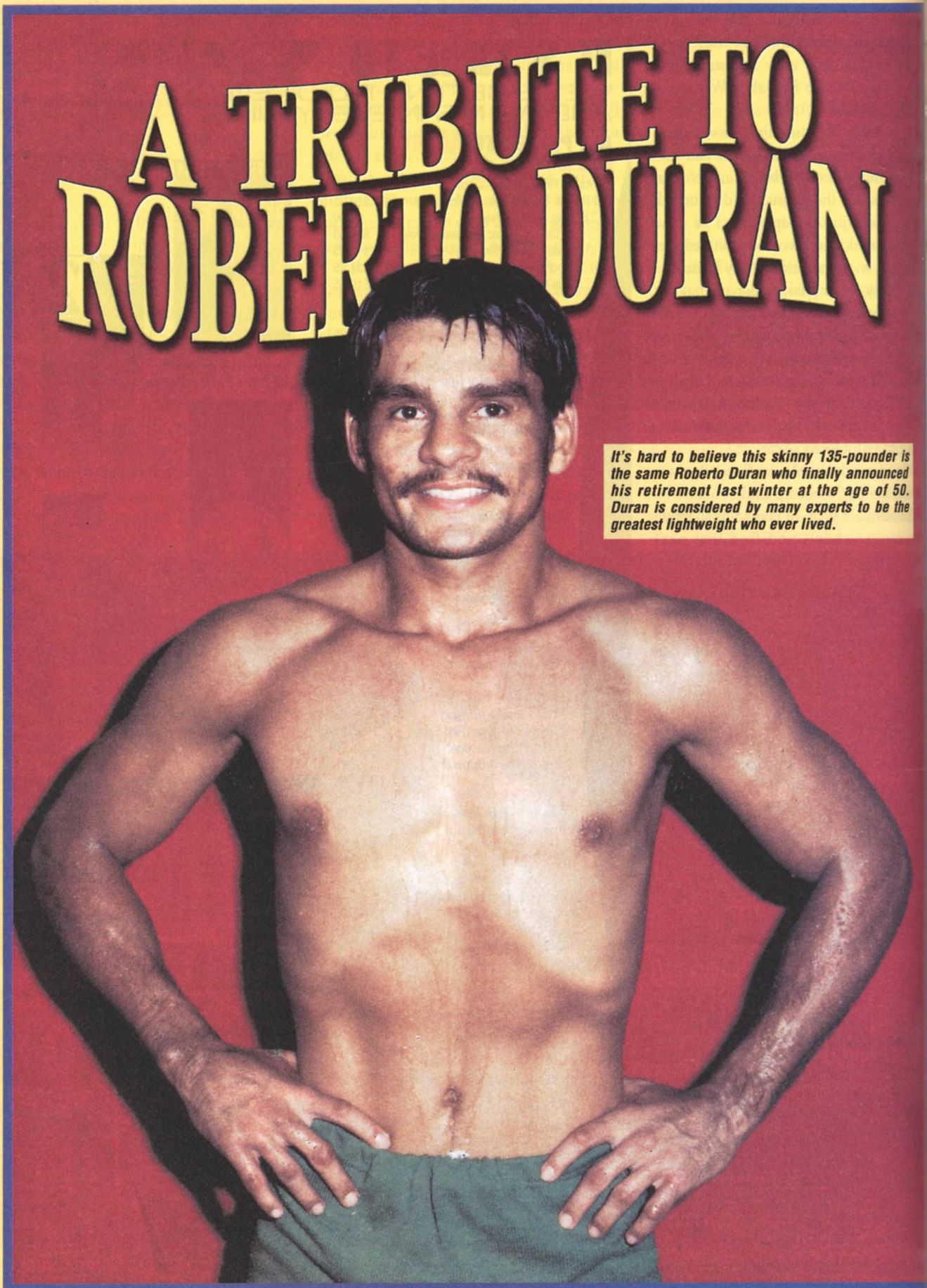


It's hard to believe this skinny 135-pounder is the same Roberto Duran who finally announced his retirement last winter at the age of 50. Duran is considered by many experts to be the greatest lightweight who ever lived.

He Fought In Five Decades ... We'll Ignore The Last Two

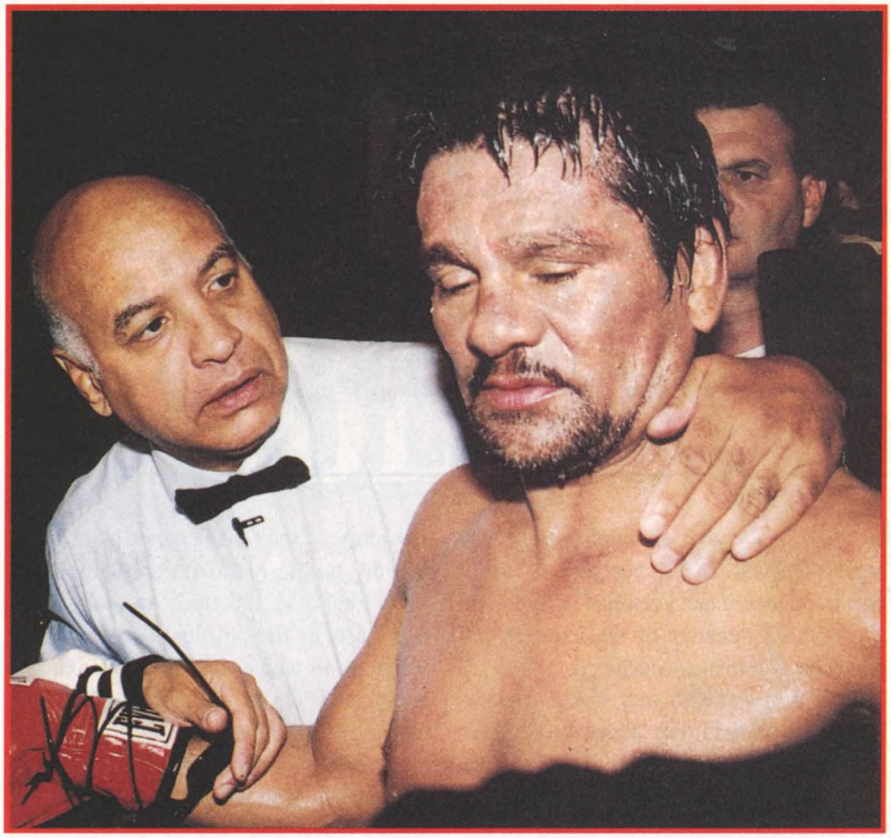
By **Bernard Fernandez**

To Elvis Presley's most dutiful fans, he never was the bloated caricature of himself that he became in his later years. He remained the young, lithe King of Rock 'n' Roll, leader of the revolution that would change the world. In a sense, Elvis' premature death saved him the ignominy of growing old something less than gracefully, although it might be argued that his legend was such it would have remained intact even had he survived a few more decades of the excesses to which he eventually succumbed.

It is that way with very few superstars, in whichever field they make their indelible mark. Frank Sinatra, the Beatles, Babe Ruth, Michael Jordan, Muhammad Ali—we condition ourselves to see them in the full glory of their primes, not bloodied or bowed, not gray-haired or paunchy or trembling or earthbound. At some point, they cast off the physical and emotional restraints to which the rest of mankind is bound, and soar to a place where imagination and reality never quite separate.

And so it is for Roberto Duran, the Panamanian great whose seemingly endless boxing career had long since taken a turn

A prime Duran defends the world lightweight title with a unanimous decision win over Edwin Viruet in Philadelphia. It was the 11th of Duran's 12 successful defenses of the crown, and the only one in which the challenger lasted the distance.



Referee Joe Cortez puts his arm around Duran after the Panamanian legend's pitiful loss to William Joppy in 1998. Thankfully, this is not the version of Duran most of us will remember.

for the worse. Cynics might snidely remark that the aging "Hands Of Stone," finally forced into permanent retirement at age 50 by an October 4, 2001, automobile accident in Argentina that left him with a collapsed lung and several cracked ribs, had devolved into the "Belly Of Jelly." But those who remember what was, who can't put aside images of the black-haired, fiery-eyed destroyer who mesmerized a generation of fight fans, are not likely to mentally file away any other version of him. As is the case with the vintage '57 Elvis, the prevailing memory of Duran will be of him at his charismatic peak: glaring down at a battered Ken Buchanan, devastating Ray Lampkin, imposing his will on Sugar Ray Leonard in the first of their three bouts.

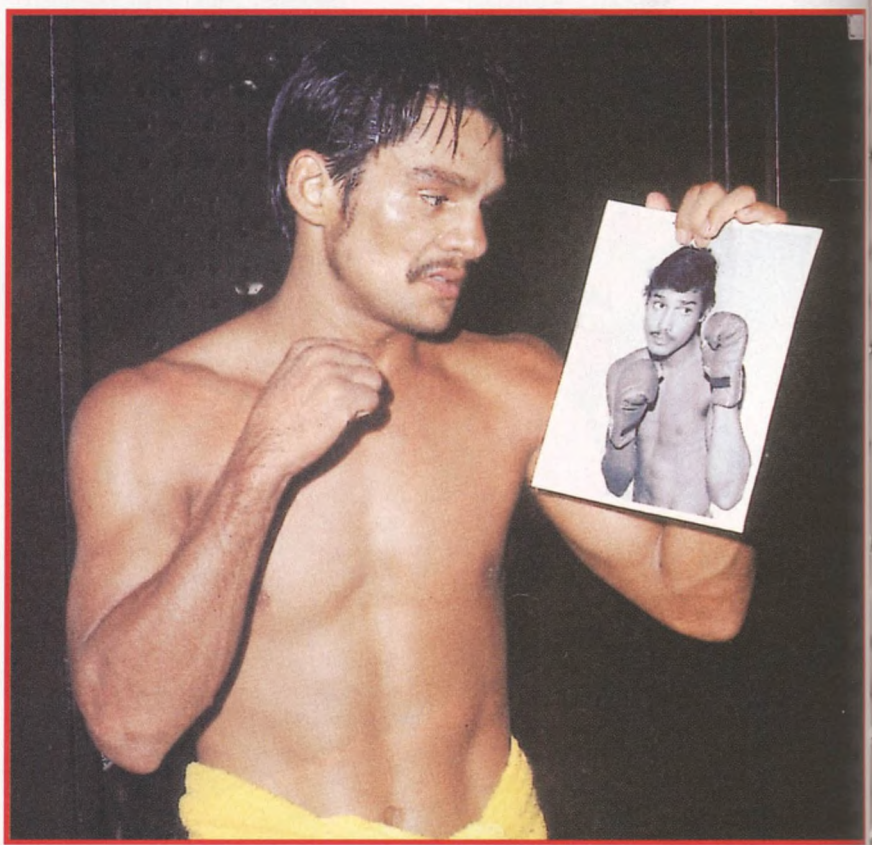
For others, the sights that will stick will be of an older Duran's emphatic comeback conquests of Davey Moore and Iran Barkley, when all logic dictated that there would be no more miracles for him to perform inside the ring.

Few idolators will dwell on the disgrace of his "No Mas" rematch with Leonard, the battering he endured at the hands of William Joppy in his final shot at a major title, or the softened physique and diminished skills that serve as counterpoints to all those career exclamations.

"He's the best fighter I've ever written about," said recently retired Associated Press boxing writer Ed Schuyler Jr., 67, who covered the sport for 41 years and was at ringside for virtually every important bout in Duran's career. "I covered his first fight in the United States, against Benny Huertas, which was on the undercard of [Ismael] Laguna-Buchanan [in 1971]. It was, like, a revelation. I remember thinking, *Good God, who is this guy?*

"In the '70s, he was absolutely unbelievable. He could slip a punch, he could block a punch, he could attack. Just a great, great fighter.

"I once put together a panel of experts—Don Chargin, Gil Clancy, Eddie Futch, Lou Duva, and Angelo Dundee—who saw all the great fighters going back to the '30s and '40s, and they picked Duran as the best lightweight of the 20th century, with Benny Leonard second. But I've seen tapes of Benny Leonard and, as good as he was, I don't see how he could have hung with Duran's relentless fury. At 135 pounds, when he was still in his 20s,



Three-division former titlist Alexis Arguello is the victim here of that famous Duran sneer. Luckily for Arguello, he never became the victim of Duran's debilitating attack, as a late-'70s dream fight between the two Latino stars failed to materialize.

The moment Duran wishes he could have back: The rematch between "Hands Of Stone" and Sugar Ray Leonard is stopped as Duran utters the words, "No mas." Even this lowest of low moments, however, does little to detract from Duran's legacy.

Duran was about as good as it gets."

In a perfect world, Duran would have walked away from boxing financially fixed for life after the last of his signature victories, the February 24, 1989, dethroning of WBC middleweight titlist Barkley in snowbound Atlantic City, New Jersey. It would have been the equivalent of Rocky Marciano retiring as undefeated heavyweight champion, of Jim Brown quitting the NFL after leading the league in rushing, of Sandy Koufax saying farewell to baseball after a 27-win season.

But perfect endings are as rare as appearances by Halley's Comet, so Duran trudged on, the paydays shrinking as his waistline expanded. He struggled to remain competitive with fighters who, in another time, would have been honored to carry his spit bucket.

It is a tribute to the grip that Duran continued to have on an adoring public that he was sanctioned as the challenger to Joppy, the WBA middleweight titleholder, for a bout that was held on August 28, 1998. It is a commentary on how far he had slipped that his last bid to capture more lightning in a bottle resulted in a horrific, third-round TKO loss to a good but hardly great fighter who never will be anyone's idea of a legend.

Ferdie Pacheco, the Showtime analyst for that bout, was dismayed to see history repeating itself yet again.

"I sure hope it's the end of the line for Roberto," Pacheco said at the time. "It should have been the end of the line 10 years ago. What happened tonight happens too often in boxing. How often do we need to see Joe Louis knocked out by Rocky Marciano, Muhammad Ali beaten to a pulp by Larry Holmes, Sugar Ray Robinson losing to everybody? How much longer do we need to see these legends take beatings like this? This wasn't a boxing match. It was a licensed execution."

Duran announced his sixth retirement after the Joppy debacle, but it was a declaration written in wet sand, not wet cement. He lingered on for four more fights, going 2-2 to finish 104-16, with 69 knockout triumphs, in a career that dated back to March 8, 1967, when, as a scarcely reformed, 15-year-old street brawler, he scored a four-round decision over Carlos Mendoza.

Mike Acri, who promoted Duran from 1987 to '97, theorized the great man stuck around for two of the oldest reasons any fighter ever stays on beyond his prime: because it's the only thing he knows how to do, and because he needed the money.

"When I had him, he grossed $14.5

(Continued on page 44)

Roberto Duran

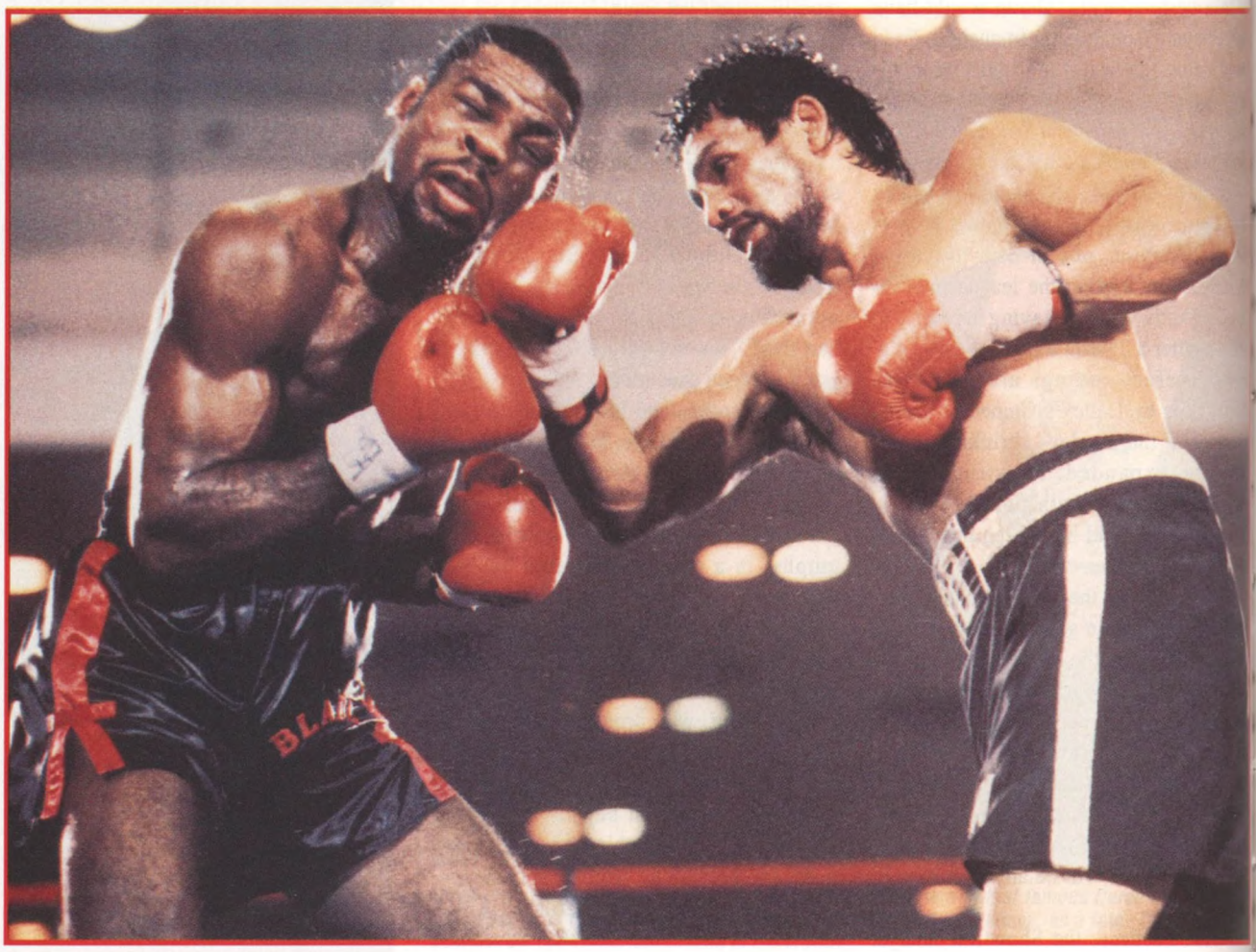
(Continued from page 43)

million, and I estimate his total ring earnings to be more than $40 million," Acri said. "Now, I don't know how much of that went to his managers and trainers, but I do know he was carrying a pretty heavy payroll and that he wasn't real good about saving for a rainy day.

"When I had him, I was careful who I matched him with because of his age. But you want to know something? Right to the end, he was the embodiment of *machismo*, a man's man who never ducked anybody and who always came to fight. That's why the American public—hell, the world—fell in love with him. He could give a lot of good fighters a pretty good go of it even into the mid-'90s. And we're talking about somebody who was at least 20 pounds and 10 years past his heyday. How many guys can you say that about?

"I really believe no one is going to

Duran's two great resurrections came in 1983 against Davey Moore (above) for the WBA junior middleweight belt, and in '89 against Iran Barkley (below) for the WBC middleweight title. Following the upset win over Barkley would have been a perfect time for Duran to retire, but he hung around for another 12 years and 27 fights.



remember the Duran who got crushed by Roppy. He's pretty much been forgiven for even the 'No Mas' thing. I mean, he's like Ali. God only made so many of those guys."

Duran, like Ali, was—*is*—unique for reasons that extend beyond the vastness of his physical skills. Great fighters at once embody all that is beautiful and barbaric in boxing; there is a certain cruelty that must be brought to their work, which they dole out in measured doses.

Never once did Duran apologize for the pain he dispensed with obvious glee. He vowed to send one opponent who had been foolish enough to question his manhood to the morgue instead of the hospital, and the fact that he did not quite succeed was not for lack of trying.

It was this Duran, arrogant, abusive, and a master of mind games, who outfought and outpsyched the then-undefeated Sugar Ray Leonard to capture the WBC welterweight championship on June 20, 1980, in Montreal.

Former heavyweight champion Joe Frazier also was renowned for his pressuring tactics, but even Smokin' Joe had to marvel at the beast that was Duran. Asked if Duran reminded him of anyone, Frazier said, "Yeah. He reminds me of Charles Manson."

At his best, Duran never had any difficulty in summoning the demons within himself. They always were there, raging to be freed from the minimum-security prison of his mind. And when they finally were sprung, on fight night, Duran did not so much resemble a boxer as a possessed man very much in need of an exorcism.

"He had a certain presence that you could feel," Leonard said in recalling the war in Montreal. "When I stepped into that ring with him, I felt a numbness. He had me in a sense of awe."

The summit of Montreal, as it turned out, was the last time Duran could be held up as the ultimate example of malicious invincibility. Five months later, in New Orleans, the warrior who would never quit did just that, turning his back on Leonard and uttering the words—"No Mas"—that would forever haunt him.

"Frustration and humiliation," Leonard, no longer numbed, said of Duran's shocking abdication. "It's the same type of men-

(Continued on page 46)

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Roberto Duran

(Continued from page 45)

tality as when you beat a bully in the streets. You take away his cockiness."

Schuyler said Leonard was smart to rush Duran back into action so soon after their first meeting; Duran had a deserved reputation for letting himself go in between bouts,

"Duran beat a younger, stronger, bigger man in Montreal, but then he got way out of shape," Schuyler said. "In New Orleans, he was training in a rubber suit. You just knew he came back too fast. There's no question Leonard and [manager] Mike Trainer knew what they were doing in pushing for an immediate rematch.

"Instead of biting a guy's ears, he just quit. It was a streetfighter's reaction, like Tyson's was a streetfighter's reaction. Duran basically said, 'Screw it, I'll get you the next time.' He didn't realize it would be a long, long time before there would be a next time."

So why was it that Duran was able to scrub off the taint of "No Mas"? Because he never crawled away and hid, because he continued to have moments where he flashed his former brilliance, because w all came to realize that, at his best, he wa a talent so luminescent that the passage time could never completely eradicate h glow.

"I will fight and I will win for as lo as I care to," he said before a 1994 bo with Vinny Pazienza, "because *I a Duran*." He said it with the imperious a of a monarch who is accustomed to th privileges of royalty, who presumes th old order must endure if only through th force of his will.

And as was the case with Jac Dempsey, another scowling destroyer wh came to occupy a warm place in the hear of those who once feared and hated him Duran gradually revealed something o himself that suggested there was, indee something to love.

"He was dangerous inside the ring, bu not outside it," Acri said. "One time he g into trouble for not having his driver license, but that's about it. He wasn't th type of guy to jack anybody at a nightclu or something like that. I guess that coun for something."

What he did inside the ring will cou forever.

Bernard Fernandez covers boxing fo the Philadelphia Daily News and is th president of the Boxing Writers Associ ation of America.

Mike Acri, who promoted Duran toward the end of his career, checks out the 1996 issue of The RING that listed "The Top 50 Fighters Of The Last 50 Years." Duran placed third, behind only the great Sugar Ray Robinson and Muhammad Ali.

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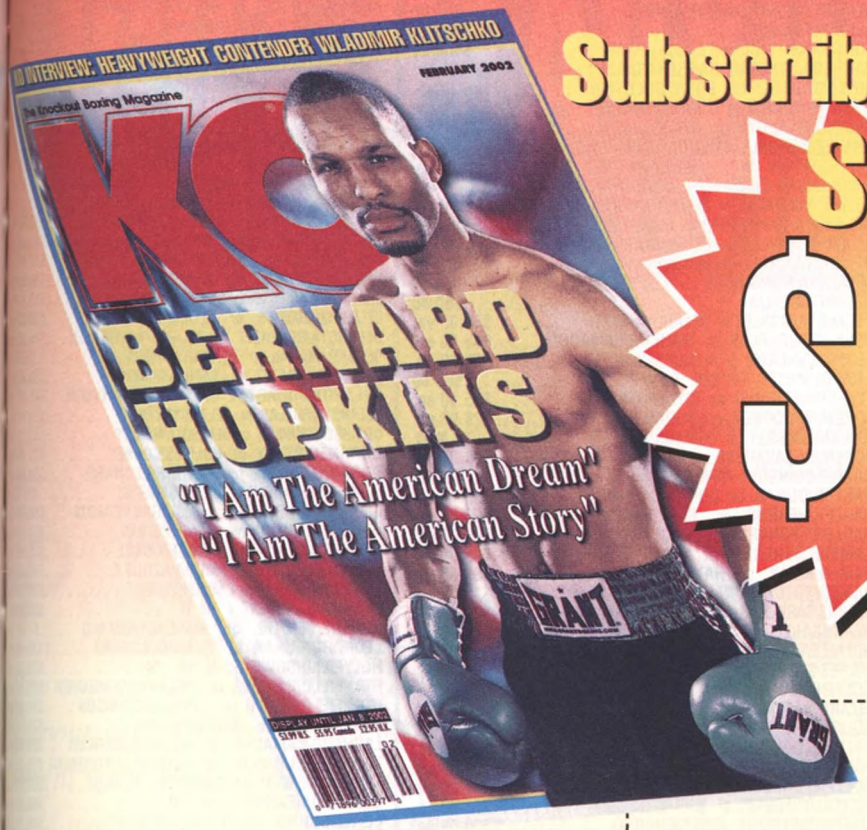

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THE 20 GREATEST LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS OF ALL-TIME

Selections by THE RING Editors
Written by William Dettloff

Pity the lost light heavyweights. In the glory days of the original eight weight classes, theirs was the least glorified, the least appreciated. Sandwiched between the two glamour divisions of middleweight and heavyweight, you always got the sense that if they could move down, they would. They couldn't, of course—that's where most of them came from, after all. So they moved up, the best ones anyway, unsatisfied with their lots at 175, no matter how successful.

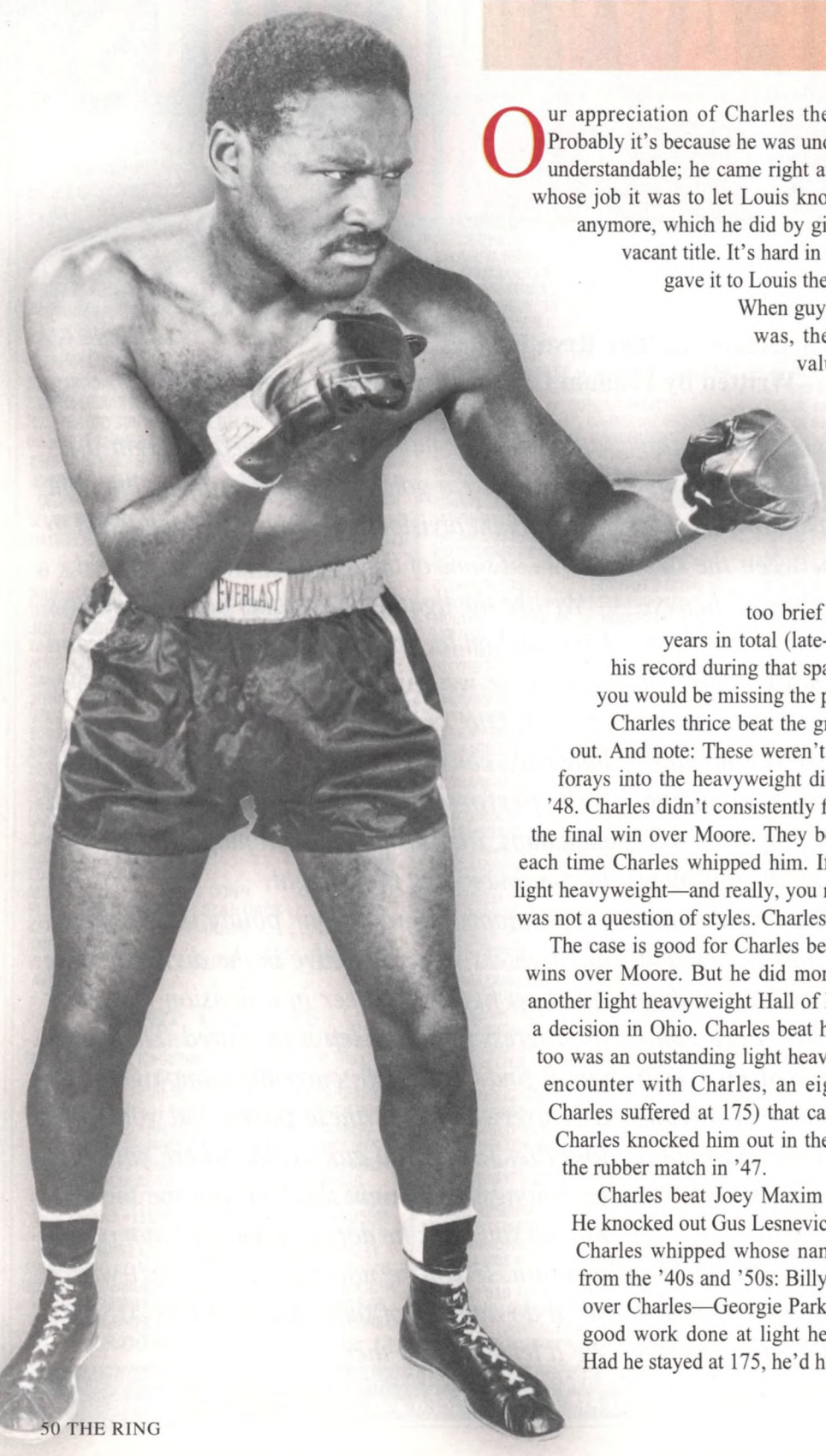
For most, the results weren't great. And how regrettable it is that such magnificent and dominant stars as Archie Moore, and Bob Foster, and Michael Spinks were so unfulfilled and underpaid at their best weight that they were compelled to take their chances against men who held over them considerable physical advantages. Better to be a serf at heavyweight than a king at light heavy, the thinking went. What a shame.

In a sense it's better today for the guys at 175. The divisions now above and below them—cruiserweight and super middleweight—are frequently pitiable. They make the light heavyweight division look like a gold mine. And in a way the light heavyweight division has some charm attached to it now—it's one of the original, old school eight.

We like the light heavyweights just fine, always have, and on the following pages we analyze and rate those we think are the best 20 that ever existed. Our criterion is the same as always: longevity, consistency, quality of opposition, big-fight performance, results of head-to-head matchups, and lastly, who we judge would have beaten whom had they fought.

An important note: Our policy is to exclude any fighters who are active in the division being rated—a fighter's career in a division is a work in progress until he's left it or retired. That's why you'll find Virgil Hill, currently campaigning as a cruiserweight, on these pages, but you won't find Roy Jones. You can decide where you think he belongs. You might think he's in the top five. Maybe you think he doesn't even make honorable mention. If you're not quite sure, don't worry. We'll do another of these lists in 10 or 20 years. We'll let you know then.

1 EZZARD CHARLES
96-25-1 (58)



Contender 1942-'48

Our appreciation of Charles the heavyweight has grown over the years. Probably it's because he was underappreciated when he was a champion. It's understandable; he came right after Joe Louis. Besides that, he was the guy whose job it was to let Louis know he wasn't a championship-caliber fighter anymore, which he did by giving Louis a shellacking in 1950 to win the vacant title. It's hard in the moment to be objective about a guy who gave it to Louis the way Charles did. Louis was an icon.

When guys are undervalued in their prime like Charles was, the years have a way of bringing their true value into focus. You see it now with Larry Holmes and today, most reasonably minded historians place Charles right around 10 or 11 in the pantheon of great heavyweight fighters, if not a bit higher. Among the biggest guys, that's probably where he belongs. At light heavyweight, he belongs at the top. You could make the argument that his stay at 175 was too brief to accord him such high standing; just six years in total (late-'42 to late-'48). You could quarrel too that his record during that span—31-3 (19)—wasn't superlative. But then you would be missing the point.

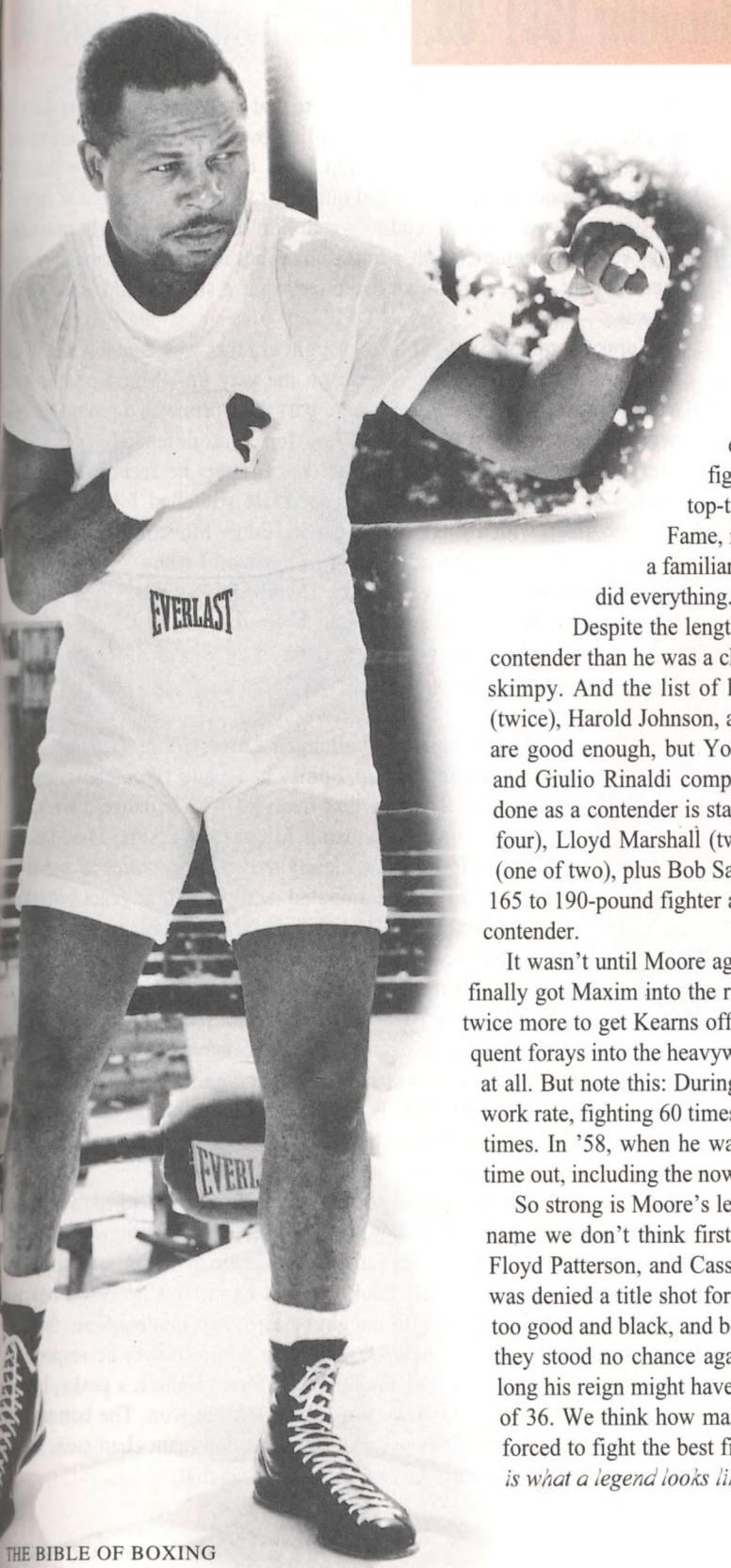
Charles thrice beat the great Archie Moore, the final time by knockout. And note: These weren't the unfortunate results of Moore's frequent forays into the heavyweight division. The fights occurred in '46, '47, and '48. Charles didn't consistently fight in the 180s until early in '49, well after the final win over Moore. They both were light heavyweights each time, and each time Charles whipped him. If you consider Moore a legitimate great at light heavyweight—and really, you must—you must rate Charles a better one. It was not a question of styles. Charles was better.

The case is good for Charles being the best ever at 175 based solely on his wins over Moore. But he did more than that. Charles fought Jimmy Bivins, another light heavyweight Hall of Famer, four times. Bivins won the first one, a decision in Ohio. Charles beat him three straight after that. Lloyd Marshall too was an outstanding light heavyweight of the day and he too won his first encounter with Charles, an eighth-round stoppage (the only kayo loss Charles suffered at 175) that came on the heels of Charles' loss to Bivins. Charles knocked him out in the return three years later and did it again in the rubber match in '47.

Charles beat Joey Maxim four times. He beat Charley Burley twice. He knocked out Gus Lesnevich. There were other good 175-pounders that Charles whipped whose names dot the records of other great fighters from the '40s and '50s: Billy Smith, Elmer Ray—who also owned a win over Charles—Georgie Parks. Over a six-year period, Charles got more good work done at light heavyweight than did any fighter in history. Had he stayed at 175, he'd have been appreciated a whole lot more.

2 ARCHIE MOORE
194-26-8 (141) with 1 no-contest

World Champion 1952-'62



Had it not been for Ezzard Charles, Moore would have the top position in this rating and it wouldn't be close. Consider: His nine-year, two-month title reign is the longest uninterrupted reign of any light heavyweight champion in history and second only to Joe Louis' overall; he scored more knockouts in major competition—141—than any fighter ever, regardless of weight; his career spanned four decades, beginning in 1936 and concluding in 1963; he made nine successful title defenses and won the world title at the age of 36, when most fighters are retired. If you want to know how a legendary, top-tier Hall of Fame fighter's resume looks—real Hall of Fame, not one of those guys who gets voted in because he has a familiar name and he won a big fight or two—Moore's is it. He did everything.

Despite the length of his reign, it could be said that Moore was a better contender than he was a champion. Nine defenses over a nine-year reign is rather skimpy. And the list of his challengers isn't overly impressive. Joey Maxim (twice), Harold Johnson, and former middleweight champion Carl "Bobo" Olson are good enough, but Yolande Pompey, Tony Anthony, Yvon Durelle (twice), and Giulio Rinaldi comprise a decidedly average group. The work Moore got done as a contender is staggering. Among the fighters he beat: Johnson (three of four), Lloyd Marshall (twice), Jimmy Bivins (three of four), Holman Williams (one of two), plus Bob Satterfield and Nino Valdez, and nearly every other good 165 to 190-pound fighter around over the seven or so years that Moore was a top contender.

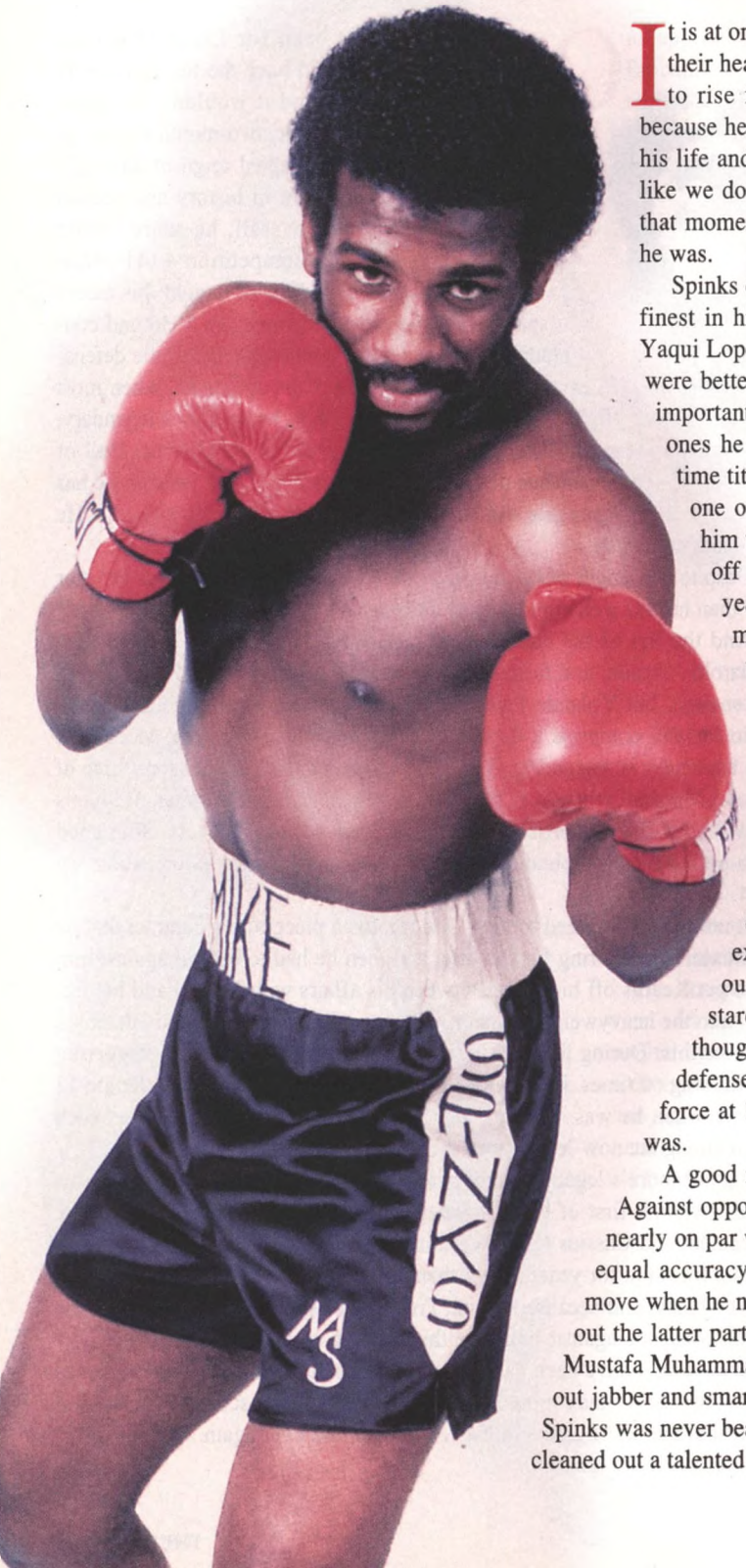
It wasn't until Moore agreed to give Doc Kearns a piece of his contract that he finally got Maxim into the ring for the title, and then he had to defend against him twice more to get Kearns off his back. Between his affairs with Maxim and his frequent forays into the heavyweight division, it's a wonder Moore made any defenses at all. But note this: During that nine-year period, Moore maintained a staggering work rate, fighting 60 times. In '53 alone he fought nine times; in '56 he fought 12 times. In '58, when he was 42 years old, Moore fought 10 times and won each time out, including the now-legendary kayo win over Durelle.

So strong is Moore's legacy at light heavyweight that when we hear or see his name we don't think first of his heavyweight failures against Rocky Marciano, Floyd Patterson, and Cassius Clay. We think of a once-in-a-lifetime fighter who was denied a title shot for years longer than he should have been because he was too good and black, and because Maxim, Freddie Mills, and Gus Lesnevich knew they stood no chance against him. We think of the cross-arm defense and how long his reign might have been had he gotten his chance when he was 29 instead of 36. We think how many more knockouts he might have scored if he weren't forced to fight the best fighters in the world over and over again. We think, *this is what a legend looks like.*

3 MICHAEL SPINKS

31-1 (21)

WBA Titleholder 1981-'83, World Champion 1983-'85



It is at once wonderful and unfortunate that the last picture many have in their heads of Spinks is of him toppling over backward after attempting to rise from a Mike Tyson right hand to the head. It is wonderful because he said to hell with it and quit right there after the richest fight of his life and we weren't forced to watch him deteriorate slowly over time, like we do everyone else. It's unfortunate because if you remember only that moment, it means you've forgotten what a superb light heavyweight he was.

Spinks dominated a light heavyweight era that was arguably one of the finest in history. The guys he beat on the way up—Murray Sutherland, Yaqui Lopez, Marvin Johnson—were past their prime as a group, but they were better than most of the guys Roy Jones has defended against. More importantly, Spinks dominated the best fighters he faced, and the best ones he faced were very good indeed. He stretched Johnson, a three-time titlist, with a single left uppercut. Eddie Mustafa Muhammad was one of the most feared fighters in the world when Spinks outboxed him to win the WBA title. And Dwight Muhammad Qawi was fresh off his brutal wins over Matthew Saad Muhammad and still three years away from giving a cruiserweight Evander Holyfield almost more than he could handle when Spinks outpointed him to unify the title.

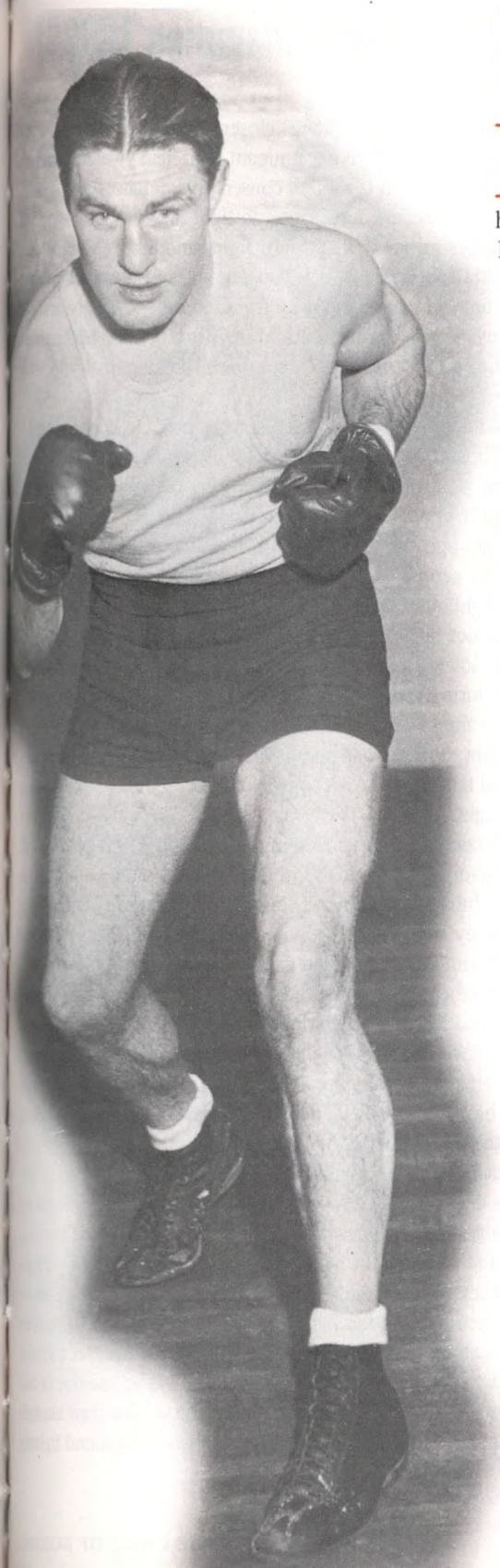
By the time he challenged Larry Holmes for the heavyweight championship, Spinks had made 10 defenses, eight by knockout. It's true that many of his challengers were ordinary: Vonzell Johnson, Mustafa Wassaja, David Sears, Jerry Celestine. But clearly they were superior as a group to those Bob Foster dominated, and were light years better than the flotsam with which Virgil Hill padded his record. And Spinks handled them, typically, the way you would hope and expect an all-time great to handle second-raters: He blew them out. Spinks' reign was not altogether without controversy; he starched Vonzell Johnson with a punch on the break, and some thought Eddie Davis was robbed when Spinks decisioned him in a defense in 1984. But this is nit-picking. He was the most dominant force at 175 since Foster, and his division was far deeper than Foster's was.

A good measure of Spinks' success came as a result of his versatility. Against opponents he knew he could overpower, he was a murderous hitter, nearly on par with Foster, and the famed "Spinks Jinx" could be applied with equal accuracy to either his left hook or right hand. But he could box and move when he needed to, even with the gimpy knee that hindered him throughout the latter part of his career. Against opponents whose power he respected—Mustafa Muhammad, Qawi—he was an entirely different fighter, a pesky, in-and-out jabber and smart mover who bored crowds to death but won. The bottom line: Spinks was never beaten at light heavyweight, he was a dominant champion, and he cleaned out a talented division. You can't ask for more than that.

4 TOMMY LOUGHRAN

96-24-9 (18) with 46 no-decisions

World Champion 1927-'29



If Loughran seems a little out of place here, it's because he is—not because he's not an all-time great, which he is without question—but because he couldn't punch worth a lick, which his record shows perfectly well. The guys all around him were punchers. Archie Moore knocked out more fighters than anyone ever. Michael Spinks and Bob Foster, who sandwich Loughran on this list, were thunderous hitters. Even Ezzard Charles, not known necessarily as a puncher, scored three times as many knockouts as Loughran did in quite a few less fights. So no, Loughran was no big puncher. Guess what? He didn't have to be.

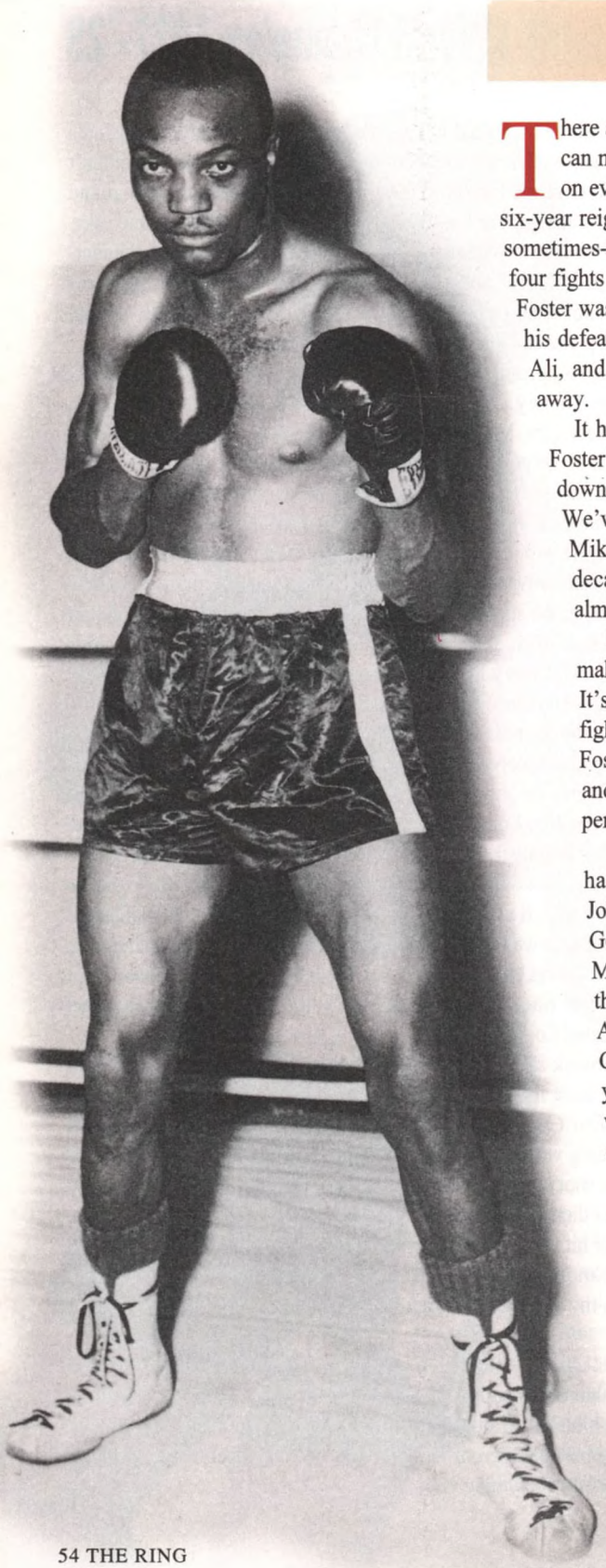
The 1920s featured a bonanza of great fighters in several weight classes: Jack Dempsey and Gene Tunney at heavyweight, Benny Leonard at lightweight, Harry Greb at middleweight, Mickey Walker at all of those weights at one time or another. Light heavy belonged to Loughran, and before you say it should be Tunney because Tunney got the newspaper decision over him when they fought in '22, remember that their eight-round bout was contested at middleweight and Loughran held his own with the future world heavyweight champion. Speaking of holding his own with heavyweights, according to the lore Loughran got on the map in a big way when he sparred with Dempsey, when Dempsey was getting ready for his first fight with Tunney. There were days when he boxed rings around the big guy, and it was a huge deal when a little guy like Loughran could hang in there with an old monster like Dempsey.

Loughran fought the legendary Greb six times and went 1-2-1 with two no-decisions. He decisioned Georges Carpentier over 10 rounds. He whipped the capable Mike McTigue for the title in October '27 and quickly defended it against Jimmy Slattery, Leo Lomski, Pete Latzo (twice), and Walker. Next came a decision over James Braddock, who later would whip Max Baer for the heavyweight title. Loughran then abandoned 175 for the heavyweights, but he never was really a heavyweight. It wasn't like when Spinks bulked up and challenged Larry Holmes. Loughran was only 184 pounds when he took on the mammoth, 270-pound Primo Carnera for the title in '34. He never got much heavier than that. And still he beat Baer, King Levinsky, and Jack Sharkey (Levinsky and Sharkey also defeated Loughran).

All that good work and Loughran never had a right hand to speak of. But he developed the most feared left hand in the business. In Peter Heller's wonderful book *In This Corner*, Loughran explained why: "I had a broken right hand I was fighting with all these years, nobody knew anything about it. I'd be good for one shot and then after that one punch my hand was done … I'd get one shot and then the agony of the thing would hurt me if the guy got up. Anybody I ever hit with a left hook I knocked flat on their face, but I would never take a chance for fear that if that hand goes, I'm done for. I could take a chance with my right, but I couldn't with my left hand, my most important."

So without a punch, but with a great pair of legs and a scalpel of a left hand, Loughran beat Paulino Uzcudun, Arturo Godoy, the ill-fated Ernie Schaaf, and a bunch of other light heavyweights and heavyweights that made up the best big men of the '20s and '30s. Big deal that he couldn't hit. He could do everything else.

5 BOB FOSTER
56-8-1 (46)



World Champion 1968-'74

There are those who will argue that Foster belongs closer to the top of this list. You can make the case. Probably he was the most dominant light heavyweight champion ever. Consider: He made a division-record 14 consecutive defenses over a solid six-year reign. Of his eight career losses, just three came to light heavyweights—one to sometimes-heavyweight Doug Jones in Foster's 10th pro fight, another to Mauro Mina four fights later, and one to Mustafa Wassaja, which you can all but throw out because Foster was 39 years old at the time and one fight away from retirement. The balance of his defeats were to the big guys: Ernie Terrell, Zora Folley, Joe Frazier, Muhammad Ali, and Bob Hazelton, whose kayo win in 1978 convinced Foster finally to walk away.

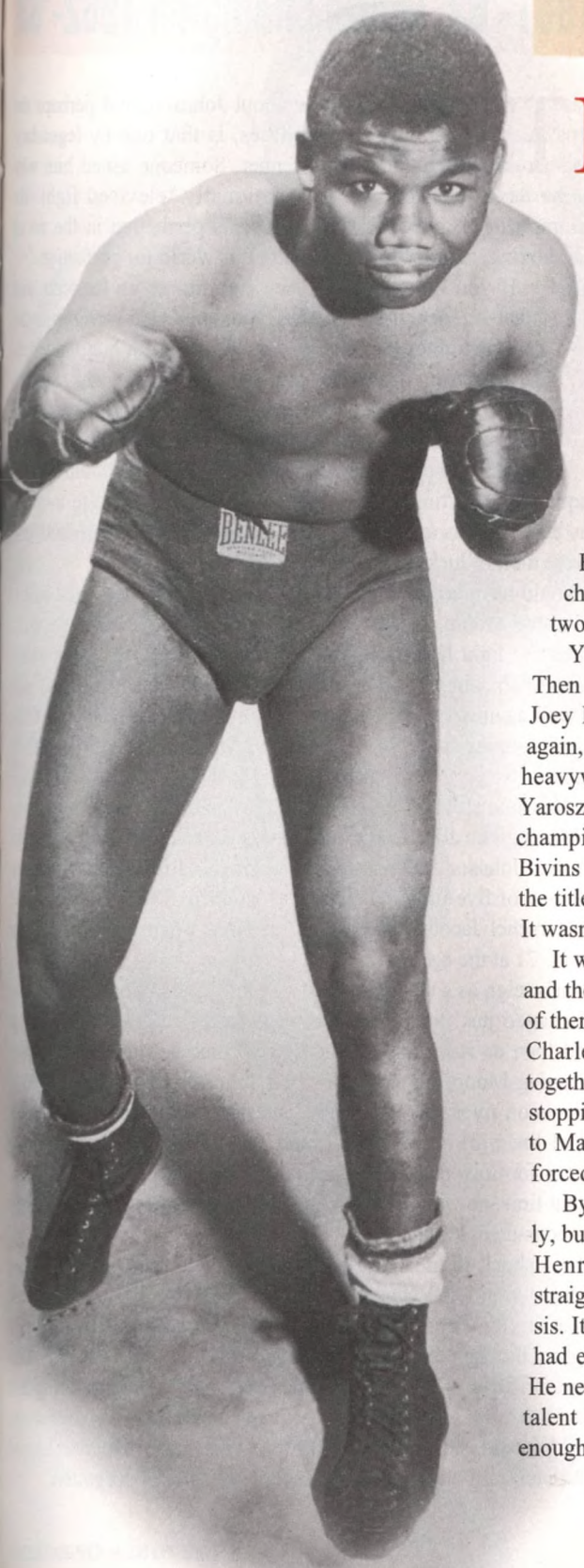
It helps Foster's case too that most of his wins were alarmingly conclusive. Of Foster's 14 title defenses, 10 were won by knockout. He hit a guy and the guy went down. It was simple. There was little posturing or carrying of lesser skilled guys. We've all seen the pictures of poor Dick Tiger stretched out at Foster's feet, and Mike Quarry, a decent enough fighter and tough like his brother, was nearly decapitated. It got so that people expected Foster to knock guys cold. It was almost unfair to let him fight other light heavyweights.

Here's why Foster is not rated higher, and why you can, if you're inclined, make a case for an even lower rating: His competition was positively ordinary. It's odd, seeing as how during the same era there were more good heavyweight fighters than at any other time before or since. But light heavy was a wasteland. Foster's light heavyweight division was one of the weakest of the 20th century, and it is no wonder at all that Foster was compelled to test himself—often at his peril—against heavyweights.

Archie Moore and Ezzard Charles and Jimmy Bivins and Lloyd Marshall all had one another. Michael Spinks had Eddie Mustafa Muhammad, Marvin Johnson, and Dwight Muhammad Qawi. Tommy Loughran had Harry Greb, Gene Tunney, and Mickey Walker. Billy Conn at least had Gus Lesnevich and Melio Bettina. Joey Maxim had Moore and Charles, even if he could beat neither. All the greats had other greats. Who did Foster have? Frank DePaula and Andy Kendall. Foster had Roger Rouse, Mark Tessman, Vicente Rondon, and Chris Finnegan. There were more like them, but you get the point. Unless you've memorized Foster's record or are a close relative of one of these guys, we'll bet you never heard of any of them. The sad part is Foster didn't duck anyone; these were the best available guys.

Foster shares much in common with Roy Jones in this sense (though you might say Jones has ducked a top guy or two), even though he and Jones are wildly divergent fighters. Like Jones does today, Foster dominated his division thoroughly. That's why you can't penalize him too severely for reigning over such a weak field, the same way we won't be too hard on Jones down the road when he's on the list. Foster didn't duck anyone, and he didn't struggle against his challengers—he blew them out. That's what great fighters are supposed to do. Would it be good if he had one or two light heavyweight greats on his resume? Of course. But their absence doesn't detract from his standing as one of the best 175-pound fighters ever.

6 JIMMY BIVINS
86-25-1 (31)



Contender 1940-'55

Bivins is another of those guys from the 1940s who was too good to get a shot at a world title. His story isn't unlike Charley Burley's. He beat as many of the top guys as you could want, fought all the best African-American fighters over and over for little money, and ended up with a Hall of Fame career and little else. Until he was found a few years ago neglected, abused, and near death in a squalid attic—a discovery that generated considerable press coverage—a lot of guys had forgotten about him. It's a shame because if you go by the guys he fought and the guys he beat when he was at the top of his game, he was a hell of a fighter.

If you were a good, tough, middleweight, light heavyweight, or even a heavyweight in the '40s, Bivins would fight you. It didn't have to be for a lot of money—it never was, with Bivins—and it didn't have to be in front of a big crowd, though a lot of them were because the fans always know a good fighter when they see one. So Bivins fought everybody. The only problem was none of them were champions when he did. If any of them were he might have held titles in two weight classes. He beat them all.

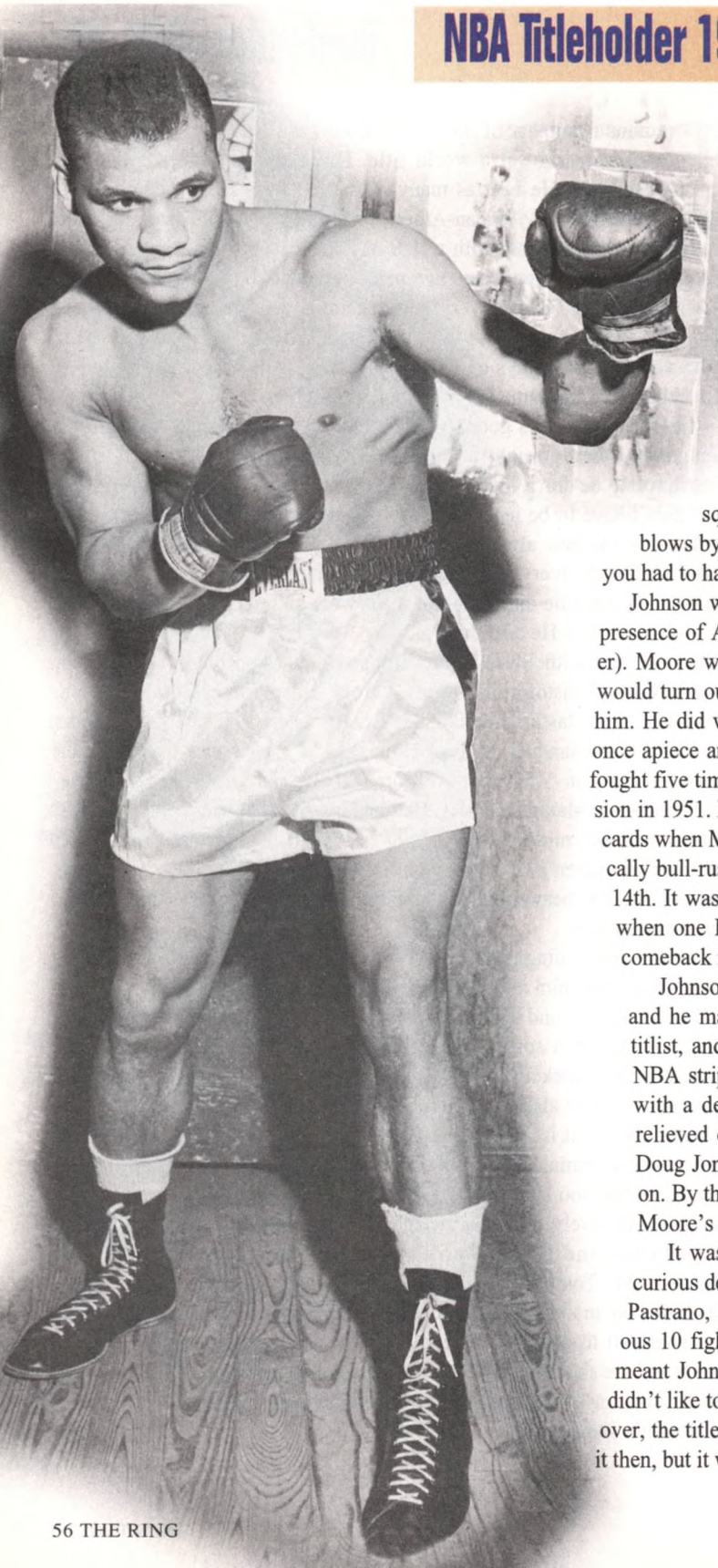
You can start with Burley, who dropped a decision to Bivins in 1940. Then try Anton Christoforidis, Teddy Yarosz, Billy Soose, Gus Lesnevich, Joey Maxim, Bob Pastor, Lee Savold, Ezzard Charles, then Christoforidis again, then Lloyd Marshall, Melio Bettina, and, a few pounds over the light heavyweight limit in '45, Archie Moore. Of these, Christoforidis, Soose, Yarosz, Lesnevich, Maxim, Charles, Bettina, and Moore were partial or world champions at either middleweight, light heavy, or heavyweight. And still, Bivins never was given a chance to fight for a world title. The best he got was the title of "interim" heavyweight champion while Joe Louis was in the army. It wasn't worth much.

It would be misleading to say Bivins beat all of these good, strong fighters and they all avoided him after that. That's not the case at all. He fought most of them several times and he didn't always win. Christoforidis beat him once; Charles whipped him soundly on the three other occasions that they got together, once by knockout. Moore too got revenge, outscoring him and twice stopping him. Bivins also lost one to Bettina and one to Pastor and one even to Maxim. The point is all these guys got title shots. Even Moore, who was forced to wait a criminally long time, got his shot. Not Bivins.

By '51, it was too late. Bivins was an old 32 by then, campaigning mostly, but not exclusively, as a heavyweight. He lost three in a row—to Clarence Henry, Louis, and Bob Baker—won four, then again dropped three straight—two to Tommy Harrison and the final one to Charles, his old nemesis. It ended on an upswing though. In his final fight, at 36 years old, Bivins had enough left to decision Mike DeJohn over six rounds. And that was it. He never got the shot he deserved, never made the big money a fighter of his talent and toughness warranted. But he got on these pages. It's not nearly enough, but it's something.

7 HAROLD JOHNSON
76-11 (32)

NBA Titleholder 1961-'62, World Champion 1962-'63



The most famous quote about Johnson, and perhaps the most telling of his abilities, is that one by legendary matchmaker Teddy Brenner. Someone asked him why he never put Johnson in a nationally televised fight. He replied: "Harold Johnson represents perfection in the art of boxing, and there is no room in this world for perfection."

If you like guys who see fighting as an intricate and exact science, Johnson was your man. He never was the kind of fighter the fans go for. He wasn't a huge hitter, as his record suggests. His attacks were subtle and required viewers to pay strict attention lest they be surprised when the opponent suddenly turned up bloody for no apparent reason. He was, in the vernacular, a technician. If you could hit him squarely, one time in a volley, it was a success. He avoided blows by every means available to a man who studied the art hard, and you had to have a bit of luck and a lot of juice to take him out.

Johnson would have been a greater force if he'd not been cursed by the presence of Archie Moore (just as Ezzard Charles had vexed Moore earlier). Moore was the light heavyweight of the era—indeed, of many eras it would turn out—and Johnson, as brilliant as he was, just couldn't get past him. He did well against Ezzard Charles and Jimmy Bivins, fighting them once apiece and winning both by decision. But Moore was different. They fought five times in total, with Johnson winning just once—a 10-round decision in 1951. He came close in their title fight in '54 and was leading on the cards when Moore, who also liked to play chess in the ring, uncharacteristically bull-rushed Johnson, trapped him in a corner, and stopped him in the 14th. It was one of five times Johnson was stopped. The final time came when one Herschel Jacobs stopped him in three when Johnson made a comeback in '71 at the age of 42.

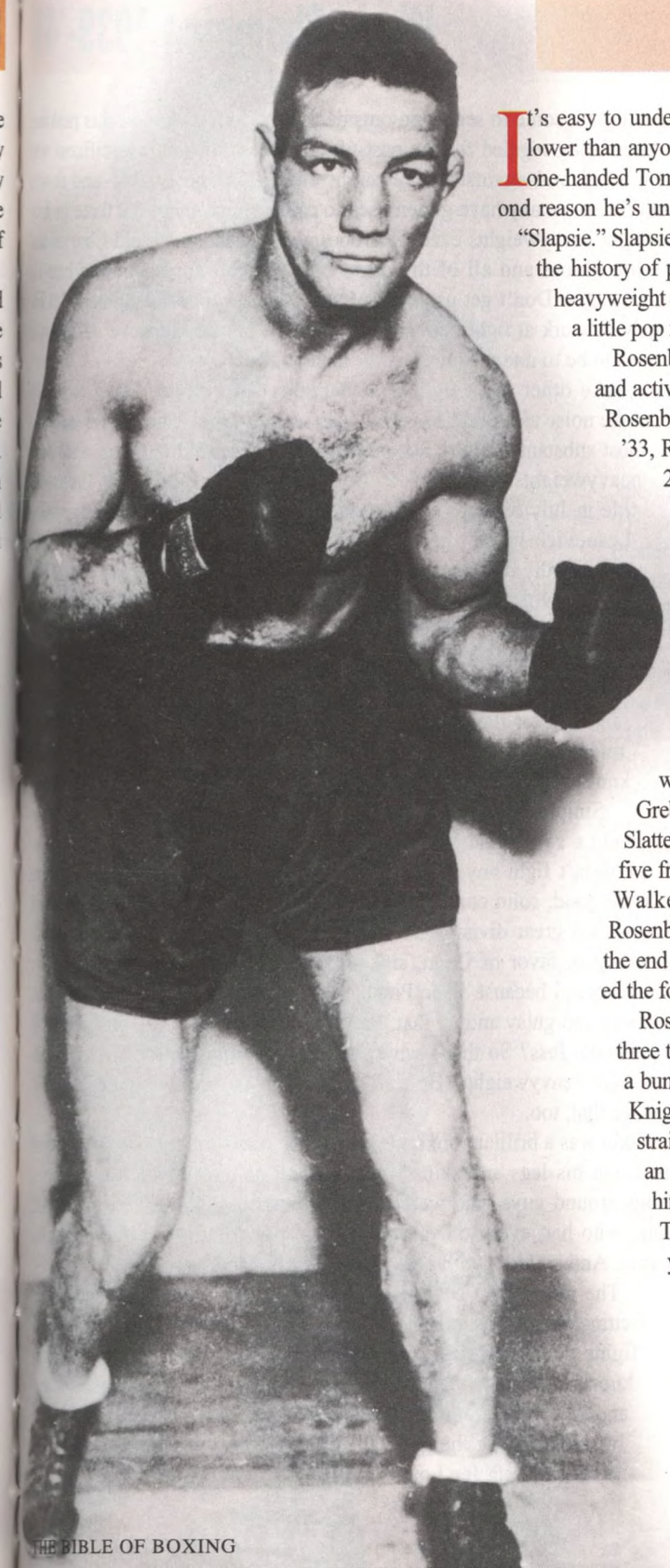
Johnson's reign as a champion was very brief; just around two years, and he managed just three defenses between his reigns, first as NBA titlist, and then as world champion. The former was the result of the NBA stripping Moore for inactivity, and Johnson won the vacant title with a decision over Jesse Bowdry. The following year Moore was relieved of the world title as well, and Johnson whipped the capable Doug Jones for universal recognition as the light heavyweight champion. By that time, he was already 33. He'd spent his best years toiling in Moore's considerable shadow.

It was a shock to most when Willie Pastrano outpointed him in a curious decision in Las Vegas in '63. Johnson hadn't lost in eight years. Pastrano, a similarly minded counterpuncher, had lost six of his previous 10 fights. But he jabbed well and wouldn't go after Johnson. That meant Johnson had to take chances, which he wasn't used to doing and didn't like to do either, so they stared at one another a lot, and when it was over, the title Johnson had waited so long to get was gone. He didn't know it then, but it would turn out all right. Perfection isn't easily forgotten.

8 MAXIE ROSENBLOOM

210-38-26 (19) with 23 no-decisions and 2 no-contests

World Champion 1930-'34



It's easy to underestimate Rosenbloom. First off, look at the kayo percentage—lower than anyone on this list, lower even than the one produced by the virtually one-handed Tommy Loughran. Rosenbloom couldn't punch at all, hence the second reason he's underrated, which really is an outgrowth of the first: the nickname "Slapsie." Slapsie Maxie Rosenbloom. Has there been a less threatening moniker in the history of prize fighting? No matter. Rosenbloom was an outstanding light heavyweight and that he compiled the record he did without the benefit of even a little pop in his gloves is testament to his skill and toughness.

Rosenbloom must appear on this list based almost solely on longevity and activity. No other light heavyweight champion fought as frequently as Rosenbloom did, and that includes Archie Moore. Consider: In 1932 and '33, Rosenbloom had 29 fights—not total; 29 fights *each year*. He had 26 fights in '29, 23 in '24, 22 in '26, and another 22 in '31. This guy fought a lot and he did it over a 16-year career. Makes today's fighters seem a bit soft, doesn't it, when they fight four times in a year and start complaining that they need a break? Indeed, Rosenbloom might have enjoyed a good laugh at Michael Spinks, Dwight Muhammad Qawi, or Virgil Hill. He had more fights in two years—'32 and '33—than they did in their entire light heavyweight careers.

Rosenbloom didn't just fight a lot. He fought good middleweights, light heavyweights, and some heavyweights too when the mood struck him. Rosenbloom went in against Harry Greb, Tiger Flowers, Ted "Kid" Lewis, Young Stribling, and Jimmy Slattery. He beat Leo Lomski and Jimmy Braddock. He took three of five from Hall of Famer John Henry Lewis and one of two over Mickey Walker, the first of which was a title defense for Rosenbloom. Rosenbloom beat Tiger Jack Fox, King Levinsky, and Pete Latzo. Near the end he took on heavyweights Lou Nova and Bob Pastor. He outpointed the former, drew with the latter.

Rosenbloom lost to a lot of the same guys he beat. He lost to Slattery three times before whipping him for the world title in '30. He lost too to a bunch of guys you never heard of: George Manley, Dave Maier, Joe Knight, Tony Shucco. Rosenbloom would lose a fight, then run off 17 straight wins, lose a decision, win 22 in a row, draw with a guy, go on an 18-fight win streak. That's the way he was. You couldn't knock him out, though. He was stopped just twice in 299 contests; once by Tommy Milligan in '28, again by Jimmy Adamick in '37, two years and six fights before he retired.

As a champion, Rosenbloom did solid numbers: eight title defenses over good competition before he lost a dubious nod to Bob Olin in New York. He fought for five more years and oddly, never again challenged for a title, despite wins over Lewis, Levinksy, and Nova, among others. He retired following a kayo win, of all things, over Al Ettore in '39. Yes, he slapped. It doesn't mean he couldn't fight.

9 BILLY CONN
63-11-1 (14)

World Champion 1939-'41

It will pain some to see Conn outside the top four or five of this ranking. After being regaled for the past 60-plus years of how magnificent was Conn's stand against heavyweight champion Joe Louis—and it was magnificent—many have gotten used to calling him one of the three or four best light heavyweights ever. That does a disservice to Ezzard Charles and Archie Moore and all of the other fighters who appear before him on these pages. Don't get us wrong; Conn was a wonderful fighter. But his body of work at light heavyweight simply isn't as extensive as it would need to be to nudge him up in the standings.

Like other great light heavyweights before him, Conn began to make noise as a middleweight—where, by the way, he got his best and most substantive work accomplished—and started tangling with light heavyweights around 1939. He bested Melio Bettina for the world title in July of that year, defended against him, retained against Gus Lesnevich twice, then started taking on heavyweights. The most noteworthy of these were Bob Pastor, whom he stopped in 13, and Lee Savold, whom he outpointed over 12. Five fights against heavyweight nonentities later, Conn, all 174 pounds of him (some say it was even less than that), was in against Louis and doing his thing. You know how that turned out. The only significant fights after the loss to Louis were a 12-round decision win over middleweight champion Tony Zale, and a disappointing eight-round knockout loss to Louis in their rematch. Two fights later he retired.

Simply, Conn didn't stay at light heavyweight long enough to build a substantial body of work. And during the time he was there, he didn't fight any other great light heavies. Lesnevich and Bettina were good, solid contemporaries. But they were not all-time greats. It wasn't a great division at the time. It's true the Louis fight is compelling in favor of Conn, and it should count toward his light heavy track record because "The Pittsburgh Kid" weighed under 175. He was fearless and gutsy and all that, but how much mileage can you get out of a knockout loss? So that's why Conn isn't among the top five or so all-time light heavyweights. He's still in the top 10, and there are good reasons for that, too.

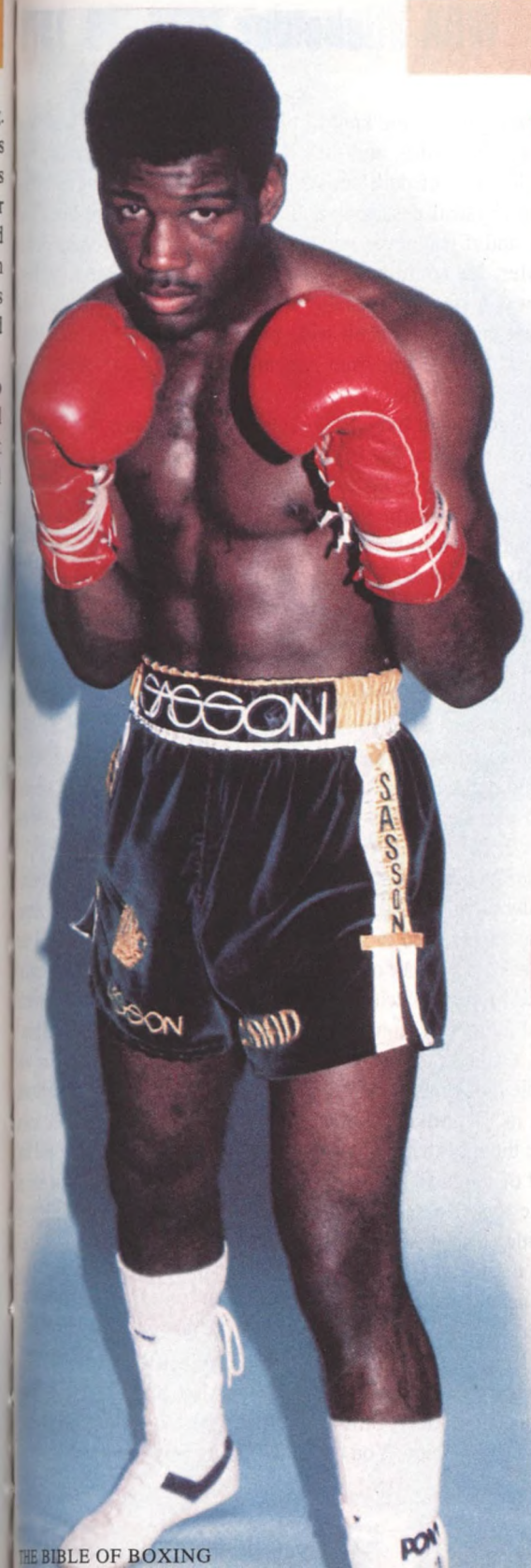
Conn was a brilliant boxer. Like several others on this list, he didn't hit hard, but his legs and skills were so good he didn't have to. He boxed rings around guys who were bigger, stronger, older, more experienced, and who had every other advantage a guy could want going into the ring. And he did it with no amateur experience. Zero. None.

The guys Conn beat at light heavyweight—again, Lesnevich and Bettina, plus Gus Dorazio—all were solid fighters. And after all those fights against bigger guys, Conn ended his career with just three knockout losses—one to Pete Leone in Conn's first year as a pro, and the two to Louis. Ultimately, you can argue Conn's standing up or down among the great all-time light heavyweights. At the least, he almost beat Joe Louis. You have to give him that.

10 MATTHEW SAAD MUHAMMAD

39-16-3 (29)

WBC Titleholder 1979-'81



You could say that Saad's great singular talent was that he was impossibly exciting. You could say too, if you're a purist, that the most exciting fighters are considerably flawed, and that these flaws, which cause the fights to be exciting, preclude the fighter from greatness. Joe Louis, for example, wasn't exciting in the way Saad was—he was too good. You almost never saw him in give-and-take slugfests. If a guy was close enough to Louis to get hit, he got hit and went down and that was the fight. That's what made Louis great.

Let's be clear: You couldn't miss Saad with a punch—at least, the Saad that was the light heavyweight titleholder. The earlier version—Matthew Franklin, to be precise—was a bit of a counterpuncher. Then he lost a decision to Eddie Mustafa Muhammad—Eddie Gregory at the time—and decided to become a puncher. It was a good decision. His brutal slugfests with Marvin Johnson, Billy Douglas (yes, Buster's father), Richie Kates, and Yaqui Lopez got him some fans and positioned him for a title shot. In 1979, he got Johnson again for the WBC title in a brilliant stroke of luck and again outlasted him in a vicious, bloody war.

Saad's title defenses—eight by the time he was done—took on a familiar pattern. His challenger would start fast and pepper him with combinations over the first several rounds, often more. Saad, a pitifully slow starter, would bleed all over the place, jab, and calmly wait for openings for the right hand. Eventually his strength and persistence wore guys down and he knocked them out. It happened over and over again: with Lopez in a magnificent rematch, with Louis Pergaud, with Vonzell Johnson, with Murray Sutherland, and with Jerry "The Bull" Martin.

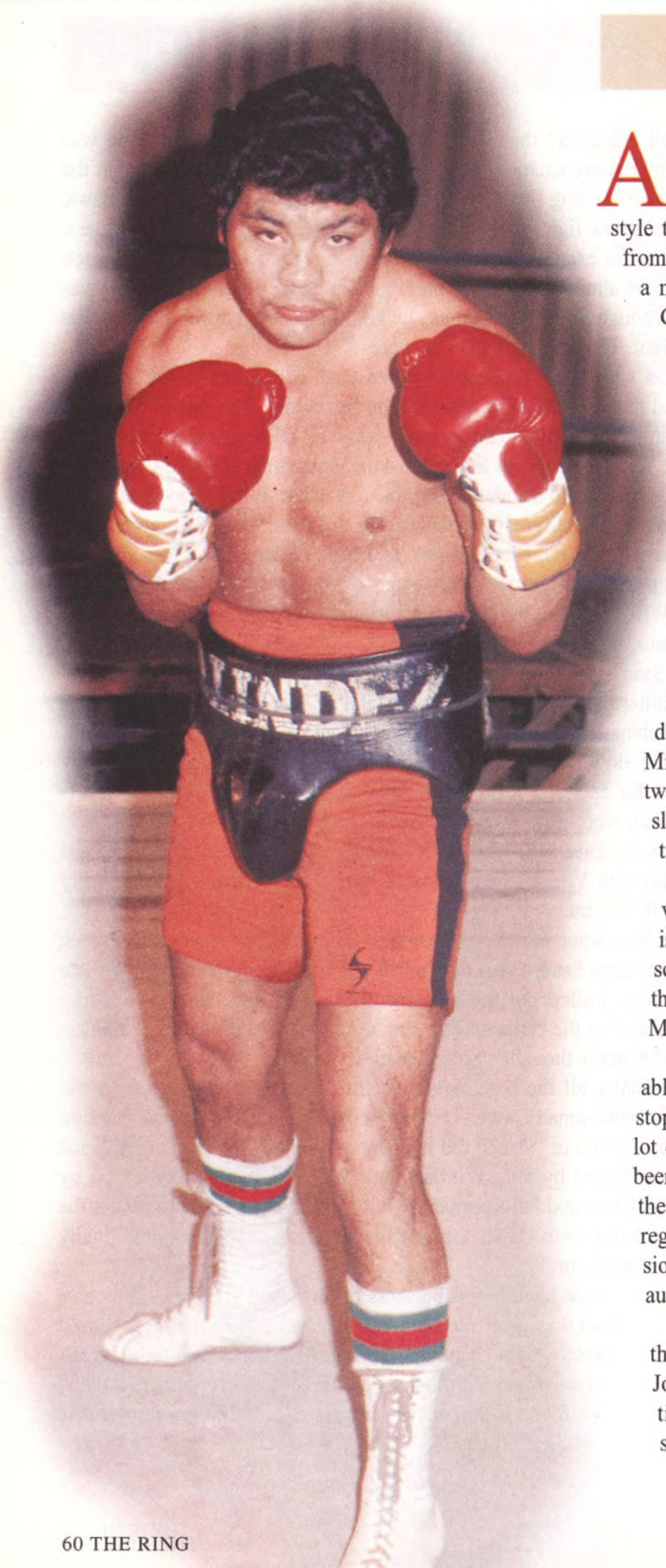
There were some minor controversies. Many observers had John Conteh way ahead when Saad, aided by Conteh's crystal chin and a couple of late knockdowns, pulled out the decision in his first defense. Martin, too, looked ahead on the cards when a single right hand wobbled him and hastened what many thought was a premature stoppage.

Eventually all the hard fights caught up to Saad, the way they do. Dwight Muhammad Qawi—Dwight Braxton at the time—brutalized him to take the title in '81 and did it again a few months later. Saad crashed hard. Stopped by Eric Winbush and Willie Edwards, decisioned by Uriah Grant and Pat Strachan. A full 11 of his 16 losses came after the second loss to Qawi. You get the picture. Saad Muhammad finally did too, in '92.

Now back to this business of flaws and greatness. Of course Saad was great. Rocky Marciano was one of the most flawed heavyweight champions in history. Nobody denies his greatness—same with Saad. The measure of his greatness could be found in his endurance, his punch, and his resolve. He was something.

11 VICTOR GALINDEZ

55-9-4 (34) with 2 no-contests



WBA Titleholder 1974-'78, 197

Ask most younger fans the kind of picture they get in their head whe they think of Galindez, and they'll describe a stocky bull of a ma with a wild frock of dark curly hair and a mustache and a fightin style that fit the physical description. It's true that he looked like a ma from the bush, and if you never saw him fight you would presume he wa a mad brawler. He could be when he wanted to be. But at his bes Galindez was a smart, reasonably heavy-handed counterpuncher wh could beat you all day with wide punches thrown with his back t the ropes. Yes, he was from Argentina. But he was not the secon coming of Luis Firpo.

No one would have thought in the beginning that Galinde would develop into one of history's finest light heavyweight king He won only half of his first 22 fights. And he was a bleeder. B he had that knack for countering off of the ropes, he was decep tively quick with his hands, and he could fight all day long. H could go to the body. His chin was granite.

As a titleholder, Galindez was a globe trotter; he fought i Argentina, South Africa, Norway, and became especially popular i Italy, where he made three consecutive title defenses. After stoppi Len Hutchins in 13 to win the WBA crown in 1974, he ran off 10 tit defenses in a very solid division—one nearly as good as the on Michael Spinks would rule several years later. He beat Richie Kate twice—the first time by dramatic kayo in the waning seconds of a brut slugfest—Yaqui Lopez, also twice, Eddie Mustafa Muhammad—at th time Eddie Gregory—and Jorge Ahumada.

Galindez had more than his share of close calls and scoring contro versies. Any titlist who scores just two kayoes among 10 title defense is bound to. He seemed to find more than most, however. Indeed, the scoring of his first victory over Lopez is what, in the opinion of most a the time, led to the rematch. There were similar cries after the Mustaf Muhammad fight, the second Richie Kates fight. The judges liked him

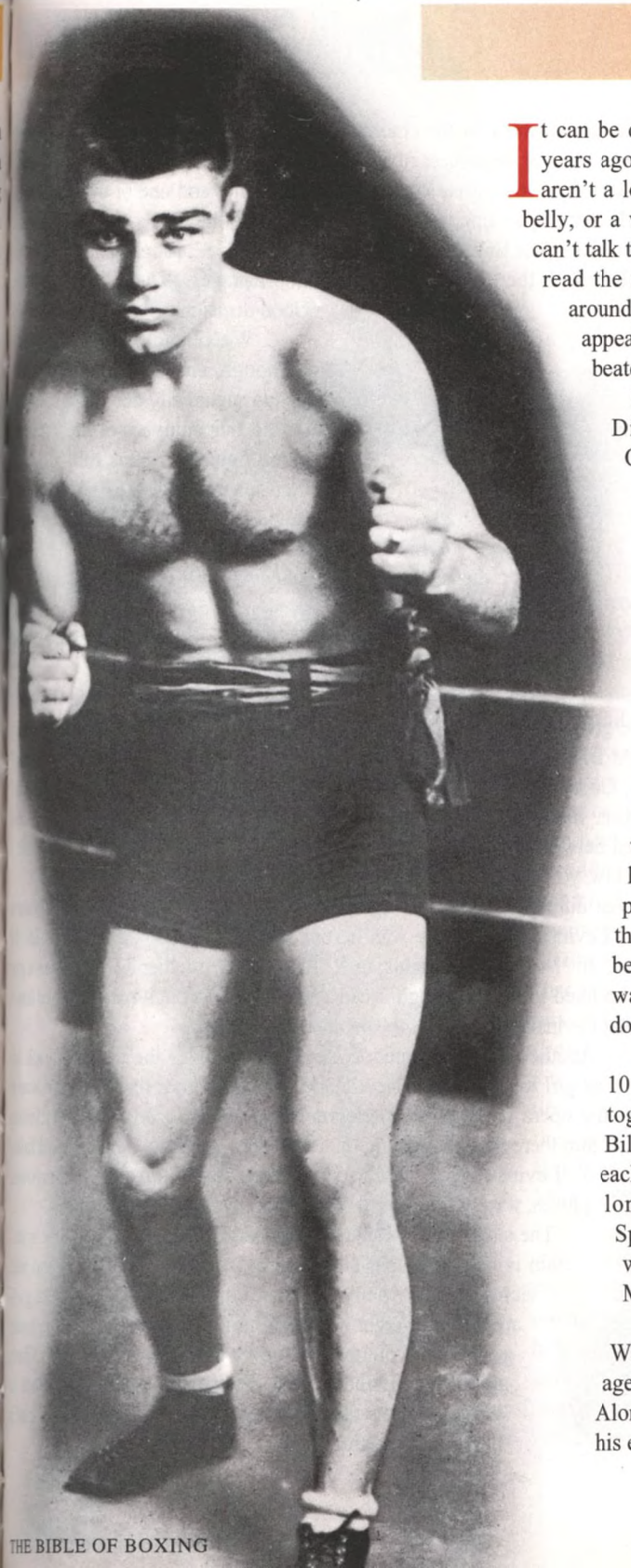
Even so, Galindez was a hard guy to handle and really, no one wa able to handle him conclusively until Marvin Johnson broke his jaw an stopped him in '79. Mike Rossman dethroned him briefly in '78, and a lot of people thought that would be Galindez' end. He was 31 and ha been in a lot of tough fights. But he'd fought stupidly that night and in the return he took Rossman to school and stopped him in the 10th t regain the title. After the loss to Johnson he fought once more—a deci sion loss to the very capable Jesse Burnett—and retired. He died in an auto racing accident in October '80.

Galindez' numbers are among the best in history. Why isn't he in the top 10? For starters, he never unified. A battle with WBC titlis John Conteh would have been interesting. Also, all those close, ques tionable decisions hurt. Still, he was the best of a good era and a strong, proud champion. You don't get those every day.

12 JACK DILLON

93-6-14 (61) with 128 no-decisions and 1 no-contest

World Champion 1914-'16



It can be difficult to rank guys who got their best work done almost 90 years ago. There isn't much film of Dillon you can be sure, and there aren't a lot of guys around who can tell you he had a good hook to the belly, or a way of working in a clinch that wore other fighters down. You can't talk to the guys he beat or those who beat him. The best you can do is read the old books and the fighter's record and see how long he was around, and count the number of good fighters from the same era that appear on his ledger. If there are a lot and if he was good, he'll have beaten most of them. Dillon was good.

Never mind that the light heavyweight title wasn't worth much in Dillon's day. No one had claimed it since Philadelphia Jack O'Brien won it in 1905 by stretching Bob Fitzsimmons before moving on to fight heavyweights. There wasn't a lot of difference in those days between light heavyweights and heavyweights, but Dillon found himself a niche. He knocked out top-ranked Hugo Kelly in the third round in '12 and promptly declared himself the champ. Nobody really questioned it, but nobody gave him universal recognition either, until he outpointed Battling Levinsky and claimed the crown officially in April of '14.

Dillon wasn't a particularly active champion. He defended the belt just twice, scoring decisions over Bob Moha and Levinsky again before Levinksy gained revenge with a 12-round win in Massachusetts. Dillon's reign lasted just two years so you would be right to ask what the heck he's doing on a list of great light heavyweights. Here's your answer: During that two-year period, Dillon fought 59 times and won the great majority of them. (And you thought Maxie Rosenbloom was prolific!) Don't be put off that only two of those bouts were title defenses. Dillon wasn't the only champion doing it that way. That's the way it was done.

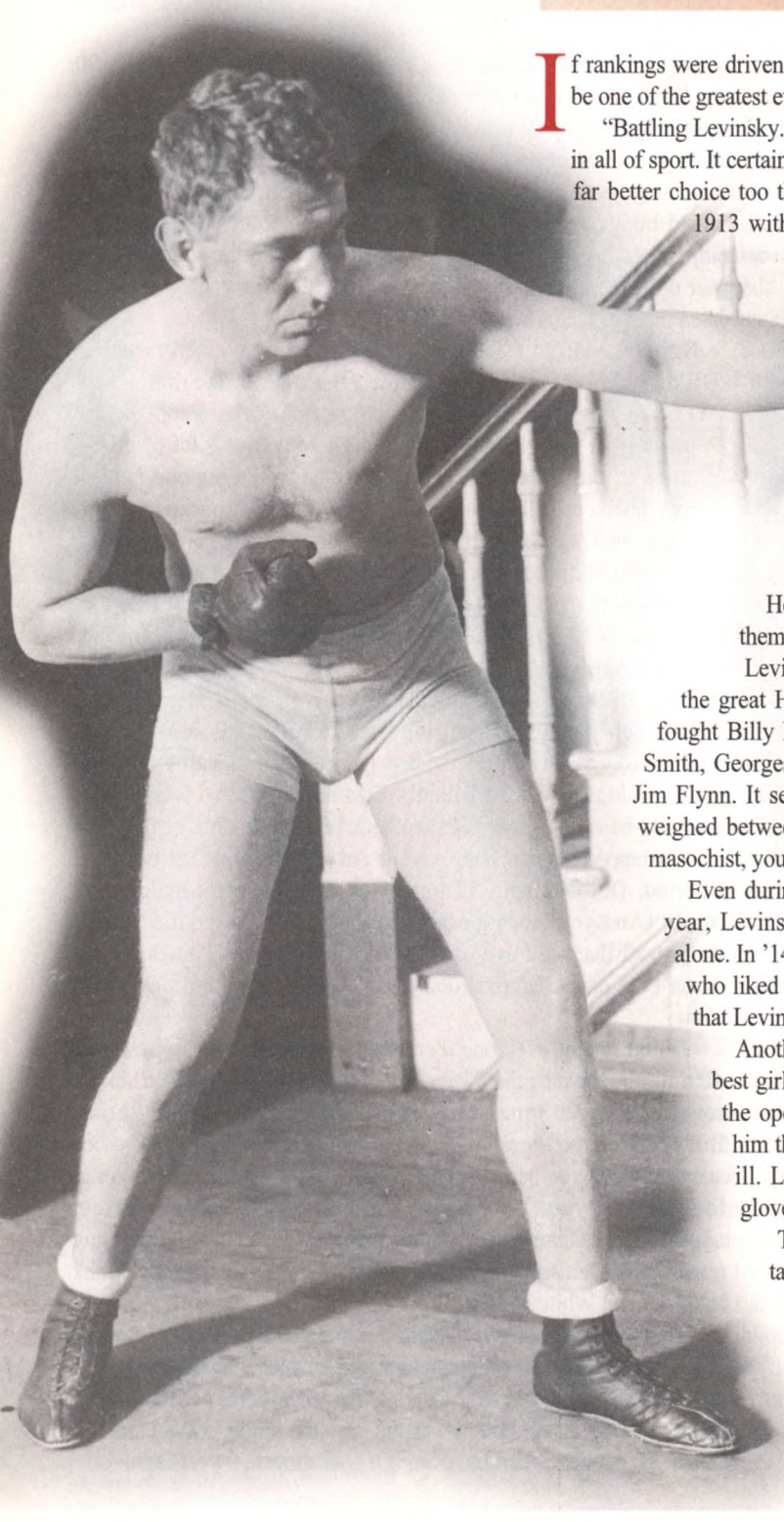
Dillon fought everyone there was to fight: He fought Levinsky 10 times by the time they were done. He and tough George Chip got together a dozen times. Dillon met Ed "Gunboat" Smith thrice, Billy Miske five times, and Mike Gibbons and Harry Greb twice each. Dillon twice beat "Fireman" Jim Flynn, the second time not long after Flynn flattened a prospect named Jack Dempsey. Speaking of Dempsey, remember Willie Meehan, the tubby guy who gave Demspey fits? Dillon fought him too, along with Frank Moran and Whitey Allen.

Look at Dillon's record again. He had 242 fights and six losses. What other light heavyweights could claim such a winning percentage? Not many; not Ezzard Charles, Archie Moore, or Bob Foster. Along with Levinsky, Dillon was the dominant light heavyweight of his era. That much is certain, even if it was almost 90 years ago.

13 BATTLING LEVINSKY

74-19-13 (33) with 172 no-decisions

World Champion 1916-'2



If rankings were driven solely by the charm of a man's fighting name, Levinksy mig be one of the greatest ever, regardless of weight.

"Battling Levinsky." It's a great name for a prize fighter and one of the great nam in all of sport. It certainly is superior to Barney Lebrowitz, the man's given name, and far better choice too than Barney Williams, under which he fought until he went 1913 with the name suggested by his manager, "Dumb" Dan Morga Good decision.

We're picky about this stu though, so outstanding nickna and such really don't factor direc into our analyses of the great a time fighters. In this case it does matter much anyway—whether you li him as Levinsky or Williams or Lebrowi this guy could fight. He battled the best mi dleweights and light heavyweights of an era that had many good fighters scraping around as at any time in histor He fought all of them, some of them into double figures. None them got off easy.

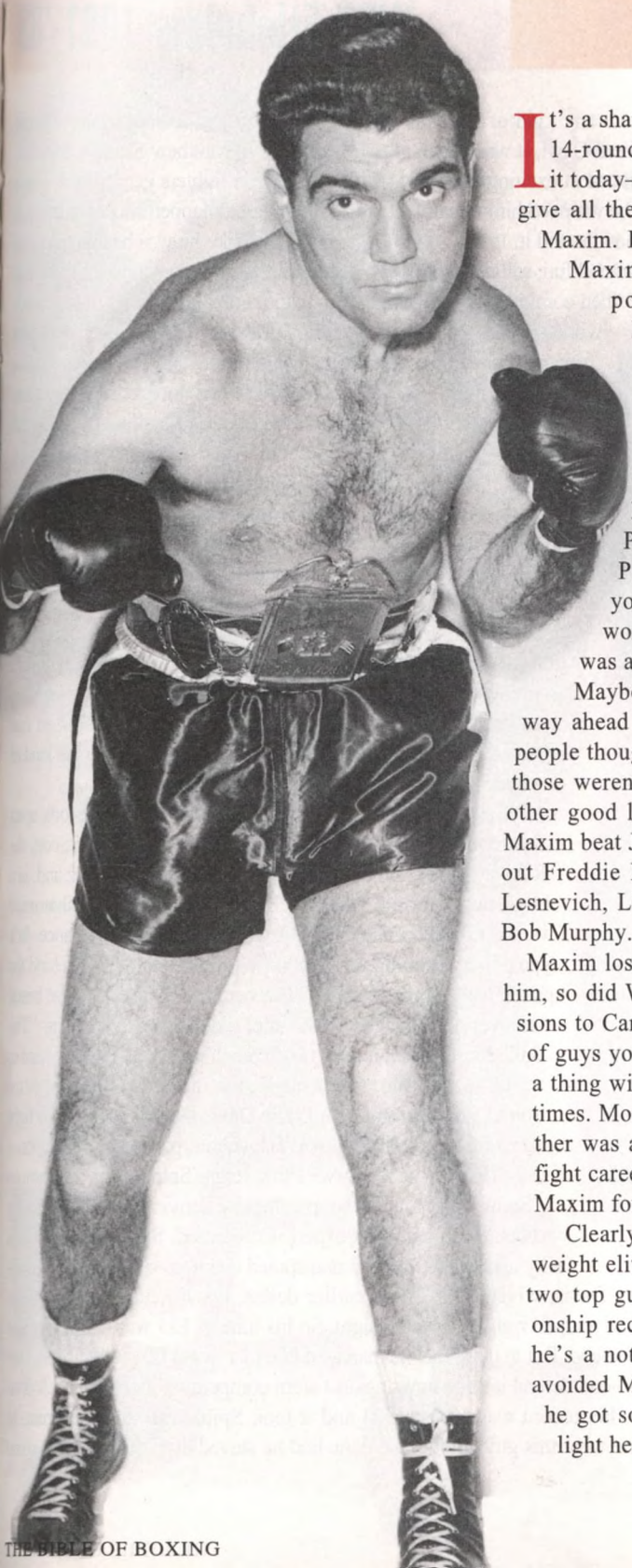
Levinsky fought the smooth-boxing Jack Dillon 10 times. He foug the great Harry Greb, too, a slew of times and Gene Tunney. Levinsk fought Billy Miske five times. He fought Tommy Gibbons, Ed "Gunbo Smith, Georges Carpentier, Mike McTigue, Young Stribling, and "Firema Jim Flynn. It seems a clear pattern: If you fought between '10 and '30, a weighed between 160 and 180, you fought Battling Levinsky. If you were masochist, you fought him more than once.

Even during a time when fighters fought more than four or five times year, Levinsky's workrate was heroic. He fought almost 40 times in '1 alone. In '14, he had 35 fights; in '15, 24; in '16, another 32. This was a g who liked to fight. Though it can't be verified through records, lore has that Levinsky once had three bouts in a single day.

Another story attributed to Levinsky involves the night he took h best girl to an opera in New York. The story goes that while he was the opera he received a telegram from Morgan, his manager, telli him there was an opening on a card across town—a fighter had fall ill. Levinsky took a cab to the arena, tied on a pair of borrow gloves, won in the second round, then returned to the opera.

The stories about Levinsky may or may not be true. What is ce tain is that he fought all of the best fighters of the day and he victories over many. He lost consistently to the best gu around his weight —it took him a long time before he cou get Dillon's number, he never could do a thing with Gre and Tunney handled him. Carpentier knocked him out four to win the title. Still, by any name, he was a heck of light heavyweight.

14 JOEY MAXIM
82-29-4 (21)



World Champion 1950-'52

It's a shame that the first thing most folks remember about Maxim is his 14-round kayo win over Sugar Ray Robinson. When people talk about it today—or when they did in 1952, when it happened—invariably they give all the credit to the suffocating Yankee Stadium heat, and none to Maxim. It's true that Robinson fought at a much faster pace than did Maxim. It's true also that Maxim outweighed Robinson by 15 pounds. He still got the win, the only stoppage loss of Robinson's career.

Don't get excited. No one is saying Maxim was a better fighter than Robinson was. But as Maxim liked to say to critics in the years after the win, "What, was I fighting in air-conditioning?" Give the guy a little credit.

Maxim is similarly disrespected when conversation turns to his win in '54 over a young Floyd Patterson, the first defeat of Patterson's career. Yes, it was Maxim's 105th fight and Patterson's 13th. But many times that disparity works in the young guy's favor. Maxim was nearly at the end of the road; he won just two of his next 10 fights and then retired. If Patterson was a neophyte, you could argue too that Maxim was shot.

Maybe you still don't think much of Maxim. After all, Robinson was way ahead on the cards before caving in from the heat. And a bunch of people thought the decision he got over Patterson was a load of hooey. But those weren't the only two fights the guy won. Maxim fought all of the other good light heavyweights of that era, and there were a lot of them. Maxim beat Jimmy Bivins in '48 and Jersey Joe Walcott in '46. He knocked out Freddie Mills to win the title in '50 and before that outpointed Gus Lesnevich, Lloyd Marshall, and Bob Satterfield. He defended against Irish Bob Murphy. It was a rich era.

Maxim lost to a lot of those same guys. They were real pros. Bivins beat him, so did Walcott and Marshall, too. Near the end, Maxim dropped decisions to Carl "Bobo" Olson, Willie Pastrano, Eddie Machen, and a couple of guys you never heard of. Even when he was young, he never could do a thing with Ezzard Charles or Archie Moore. Charles whipped him five times. Moore did it three times, each time with the title at stake. But neither was able to stop him. Maxim was knocked out just once in a 115-fight career. Curtis Sheppard stopped him in a round in Cleveland in '43. Maxim fought him again three weeks later and decisioned him.

Clearly, Maxim is at least two notches below the all-time light heavyweight elite. All you have to see to know that are his failures against the two top guns, Charles and Moore. And because of his skimpy championship record—just two defenses and all those failures in big fights—he's a notch below the second tier, too. It doesn't help either that he avoided Moore for so long and was largely an inactive champion. Still, he got some good work done and deserves his place among the great light heavyweights.

15 DWIGHT MUHAMMAD QAWI

41-11-1 (25)

WBC Titleholder 1981-'83

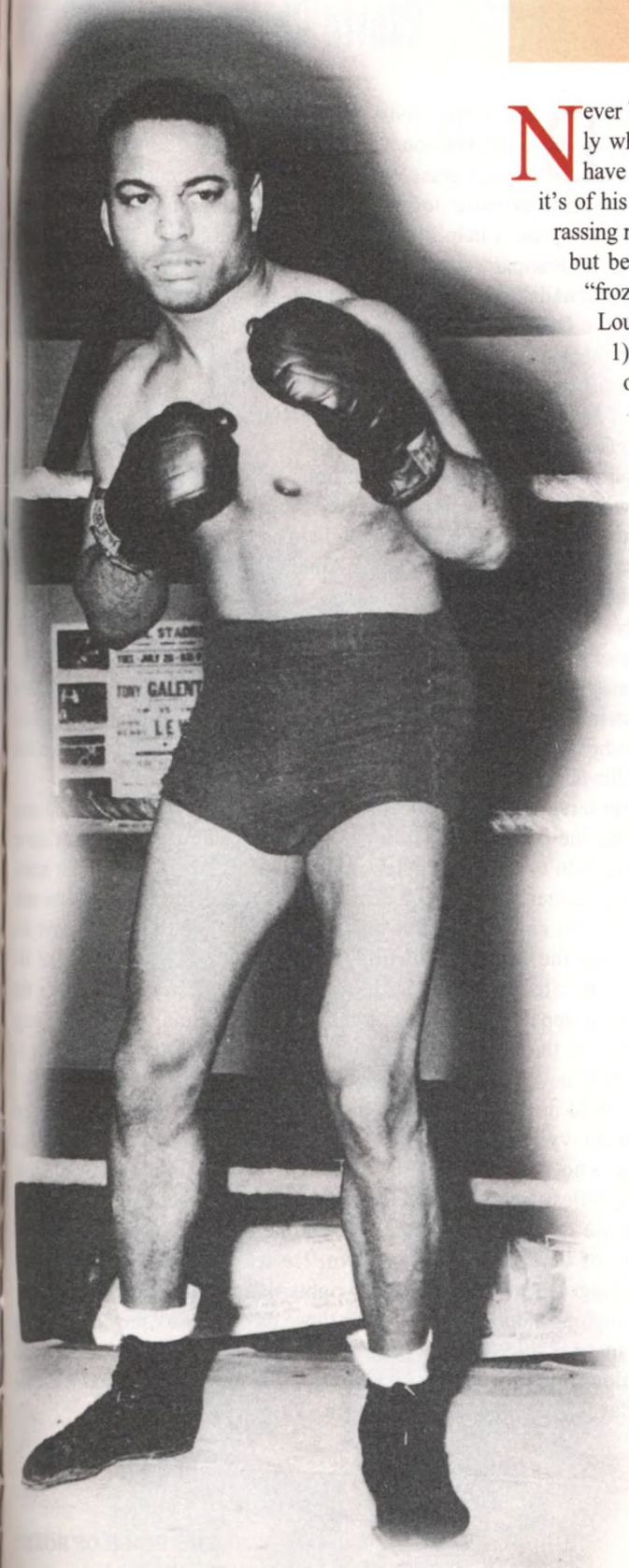
If you were any kind of fight fan in the 1980s, you had to root against Dwight Muhammad Qawi. It was Qawi, after all, who did in Matthew Saad Muhammad, one of the most exciting and most popular television fighters ever. And it wasn't just that he whipped him—really, you knew that had to happen sooner or later—it was how he did it. It was so easy, and he looked like he was having too much damned fun, rolling under Saad's slow, suddenly impotent right hands and then coming up and cracking him with a hook and a right of his own. It worked over and over. Poor Saad. You kept waiting for him to land one of those rights and turn things around like he always did. He couldn't. Qawi—Braxton at the time—was too good and too slick, and he kept rolling under, coming up, and landing flush. Plus it looked like he was grinning all the while. It was too much.

Really, Qawi had no right being as good as he was. Like Billy Conn and one or two others from history, Qawi had no formal amateur experience. He fought a lot in the streets in Camden, New Jersey—hence "The Camden Buzzsaw" moniker. And he was doing time in a penitentiary when most guys would have been navigating through Golden Gloves competitions. Either way, he could fight and when he got out they took him to Joe Frazier's gym in North Philadelphia and turned him pro a month later. He was ready. The great '40s lightweight Wesley Mouzon had trained him well, putting him through his paces with the kind of wonderful old warhorses you find in Philly gyms.

Qawi advanced rapidly. In just his 16th fight, he took apart former titleholder Mike Rossman. Next came James Scott, the Rahway Prison inmate who'd just beaten Yaqui Lopez and, in a huge upset, Eddie Mustafa Muhammad. Saad Muhammad wanted no part of Scott, but Qawi was glad for the chance. In a type of homecoming, he went nose-to-nose with Scott behind the prison walls and left with a clear decision. Next came the brutal win over Saad for the WBC title, a defense against Jerry "The Bull" Martin, then a return with Saad, which was just as hard to watch as the first. Qawi made one more defense—an 11th-round stoppage of tough Eddie Davis—before signing to fight a unification bout against WBA counterpart Michael Spinks.

That was it for Qawi's title reign. Spinks kept his famous "Spinks Jinx" under wraps, thereby denying Qawi the chance to counter it with that expert way he had. Spinks jabbed Qawi silly and walked off the undisputed champion. Except for a decision win over Johnny Davis, which avenged an earlier defeat, Qawi never fought at light heavyweight again—he jumped right to cruiserweight. So his time at 175 was short; just five years from beginning to end. But in that time, he managed to win a world title—in just his 18th fight, amateur or pro—and defend it three times against stern competition in a talent-rich division. At light heavy, his record was 19-1-2 (12) and it took Spinks, an all-time great, to dethrone him. Imagine what this guy could have done had he stayed at 175 and gotten some rounds under his belt.

16 JOHN HENRY LEWIS
103-8-6 (60)



World Champion 1935-'39

Never be satisfied to remember a guy only for a fight that he lost, especially when the loss was to a legend. Many fans, especially younger ones, have no idea Lewis compiled the record he did. If they know of him at all it's of his embarrassing 1939 knockout loss to Joe Louis. And it was embarrassing not because he lost to Louis, since most everybody did in those days, but because all the papers of the day described him as "terrified" and "frozen" and all other less than manly things. They wrote too that he and Louis were buddies and that Louis got it over as quickly as he did (KO 1) on account of his affection for the smaller man. Hey Joe: Ever hear of jabbing your way to a nice, boring decision win?

At any rate, it's a disservice to Lewis to recall only his loss to "The Brown Bomber." He isn't among the light heavyweight elite and likely would have been easy pickings for Ezzard Charles, Archie Moore, or probably any of the top guys of that era and possibly of Michael Spinks' era as well. But he was a high-quality light heavyweight who got an awful lot of good work done considering his career lasted all of 11 years.

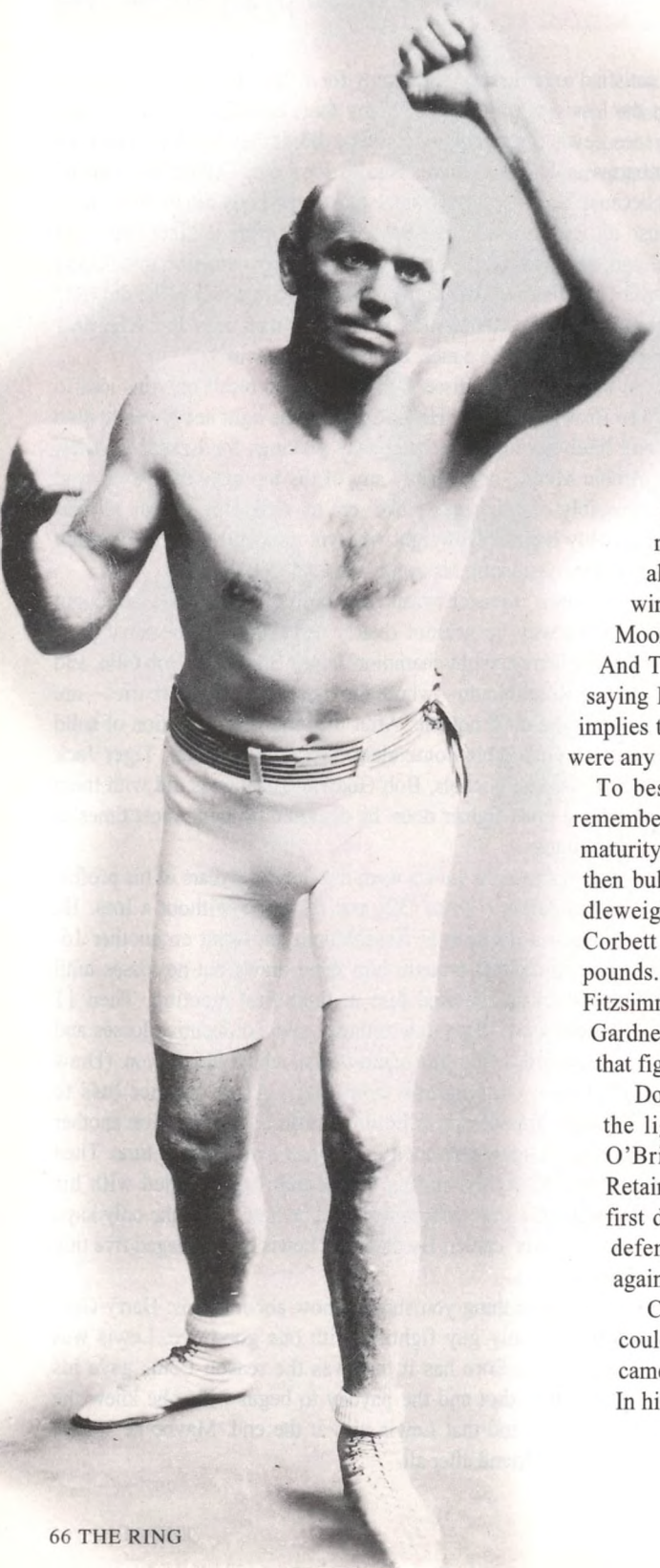
Lewis' division wasn't terribly deep. The guys he fought on the way up are not overly imposing for the most part. Future heavyweight champion James Braddock, Bob Olin, and Maxie Rosenbloom—whom Lewis beat twice in five tries—are among the most notable. After that comes a collection of solid but unremarkable contenders: Georgie Simpson, Tiger Jack Fox, George Nichols, Bob Godwin. But Lewis did with them what a great fighter does: he disposed of them, most times in big chunks.

For example: Lewis went the first four years of his professional career ('28 to '32) and 28 fights without a loss. He dropped a decision to Rosenbloom and went on another 16-fight streak that brought him three draws but no losses until Braddock decisioned him in their first meeting. Then 11 straight wins. Then, interestingly, two consecutive losses and as a reward, a title shot against Olin, which Lewis won. (Draw your own conclusions from that.) After another loss to Rosenbloom and one to Emilio Martinez, Lewis got on another streak: 33 fights without a loss in just over a year's time. Then another 15-fight winning streak that Louis ended with his friendly knockout, which, it should be noted, was the only kayo loss of Lewis' career. By that time Lewis had managed five title defenses.

One more thing you should know about Lewis: Harry Greb wasn't the only guy fighting with one good eye. Lewis was doing it, too. Lore has it that was the reason Louis gave his buddy a title shot and the payday to begin with—he knew the eye was bad and that Lewis was at the end. Maybe he wasn't such a lousy friend after all.

17 BOB FITZSIMMONS

46-8 (39) with 21 no-decisions and 1 no-contest



World Champion 1903-'05

Back in the 1890s and early-1900s, it wasn't as necessary or as common as it is today for a guy to stick to a defined weight class. You might say it's because there are so many divisions today with all the super and junior classes that a guy can't help but fall right in the middle of one, and for the most part, spend his career there. But even in the '30s, '40s and '50s, a guy trained hard, got in shape, and when nature landed him in a particular weight slot, that's where he fought. There were exceptions of course; Billy Conn was a light heavyweight who fought heavyweights, later so was Archie Moore. So to a degree were Gene Tunney and even Ezzard Charles.

Here's the thing about Fitzsimmons: Like Harry Greb and one or two others that came after him, Fitzsimmons was a middleweight and sometime light heavyweight who fought everybody between middleweight and heavyweight. And he was good enough in his day at all three classes to win world titles—the fight game's first triple-crown winner. Greb, great as he was, could only claim the middleweight title. Moore never could win the big one at heavyweight and neither did Conn. And Tunney and Charles won the title just at heavyweight. Now, no one is saying Fitzsimmons was better than these guys were. But to do what he did implies that he was better and more dominant against his contemporaries than were any of the other guys noted here.

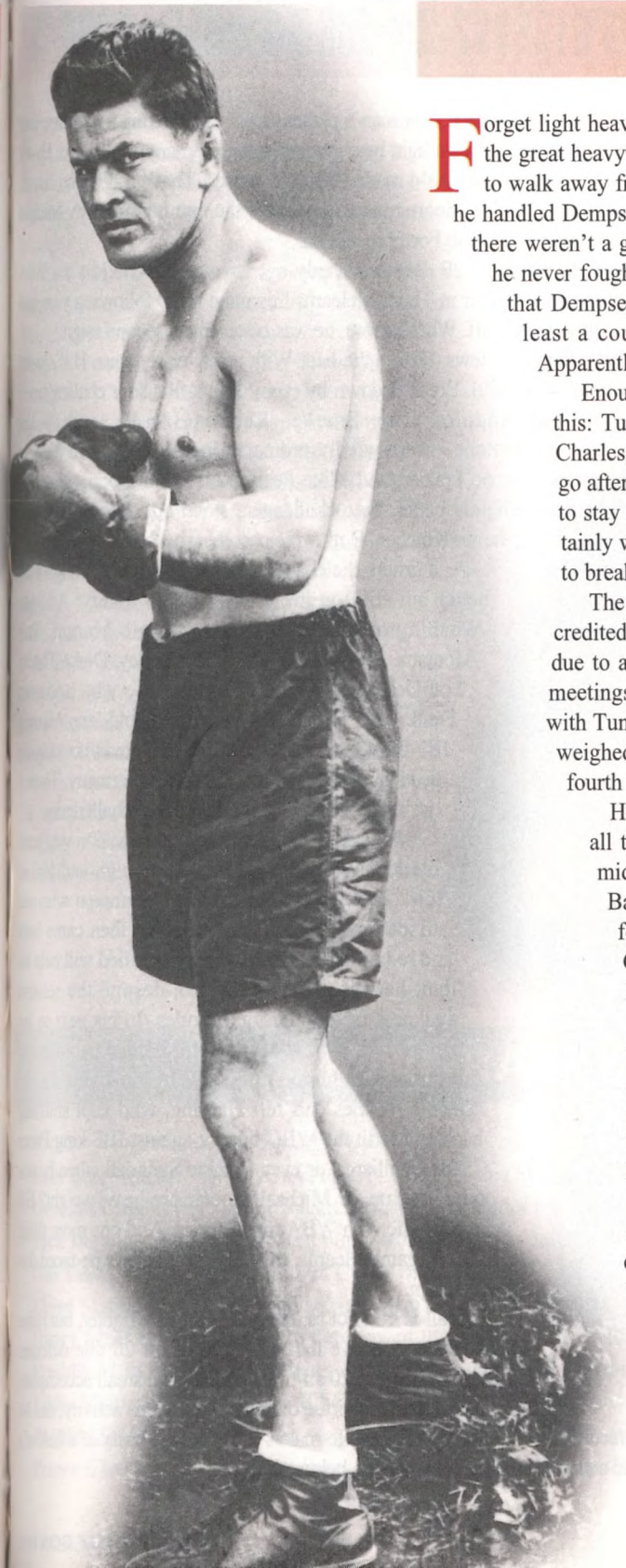
To best understand what a freak of nature Fitzsimmons was, you must remember that the order in which he won titles bore no relation to his age or maturity. He didn't win the middleweight title, bulk up and win light heavy, then bulk up further and take the heavyweight crown. It's true that the middleweight crown came first. But then came his one-punch kayo over Jim Corbett to win the heavyweight title. For that one, he weighed all of 167 pounds. It was after he lost the title to the barrel-chested Jim Jeffries that Fitzsimmons dropped back down to light heavyweight and decisioned George Gardner to win that title. Interestingly, at 168, he was a pound heavier for that fight than he was when he licked Corbett.

Don't hold it against Fitzsimmons that he made just a single defense of the light heavyweight title, that a six-round no-decision against Jack O'Brien, who in his next fight would kayo Fitzsimmons for the title. Retaining titles wasn't "Ruby Robert's" forte. The Jeffries fight was his first defense of the heavyweight title, and he managed just two successful defenses of the middleweight crown. He was good at winning titles—against bigger, heavier guys who by rights should have beaten him easily.

Champions didn't defend titles in those days the way they do now. You could sit on a title for two years the way Fitzsimmons did, and nobody came along to strip you. So Fitzsimmons was only doing what was done. In his day, he did it better than anyone.

18 GENE TUNNEY

65-1-1 (47) with 19 no-decisions and 1 no-contest



Contender 1920-'24

Forget light heavyweight, most people disagree on where to place Tunney among the great heavyweights. Some like his single loss in 87 fights and his willingness to walk away from it all when he was still at the top of his game. They like how he handled Dempsey and Greb and how he boxed rings around guys when, frankly, there weren't a great many Fancy Dans in the business. Others won't forgive that he never fought an African-American fighter. The same guys offer the theories that Dempsey was washed up when Tunney got him, and Greb deserved at least a couple of those no-decisions the newspaper guys said he lost. Apparently, Tunney was well connected.

Enough about the heavyweights. It could go on forever. Be certain of this: Tunney was an outstanding light heavyweight fighter. Like Ezzard Charles, he didn't win or even attempt the title there because he wanted to go after the biggest prize. The biggest prize was Dempsey. Had he elected to stay at 175, and surely he could have longer than he did, Tunney certainly would have rated higher. As it is, he got enough done in five years to break the top 20.

The fights with Greb carry considerable weight. Tunney generally is credited with winning four of the five, but some might discount the wins due to a seeming weight advantage he held. Indeed, in only one of their meetings—the third—did Greb break 170 pounds. For every other fight with Tunney, he came in between 162 and 167. Tunney, on the other hand, weighed 174 for the first two bouts, 175 for the third, 180 and 181 for the fourth and fifth.

Here's why it doesn't matter much: Greb fought light heavyweights all the time. He fought nearly as many light heavyweights as he did middleweights. Greb fought Tommy Loughran a bunch of times and Battling Levinsky and Mike McTigue several times, too. Hell, he fought heavyweights. In fact, the first meeting between Tunney and Greb was for Tunney's American light heavyweight title. Lots of light heavyweights couldn't handle Greb. Tunney did.

Tunney handled other good light heavyweights, too. He outpointed Levinsky in '22 for the American title, the one he defended against Greb in their first meeting. He knocked out former champion Georges Carpentier, Joe Lohman, and Tommy Gibbons. Tunney fought no-decisions against Loughran and Jimmy Delaney. The newspaper guys all said he won them.

Examine Tunney's record and you'll see that in effect, he fought maybe the last 14 of his fights as a heavyweight. The first couple of years of his career he was a middleweight. Everything in between was light heavy. All he did at heavyweight was beat a few middle-of-the-road contenders, outclass Dempsey twice—a washed up version if you prefer—and retain the title against Tom Heeney. That was it. If that makes him a great heavyweight, then he was a great light heavyweight first.

19 VIRGIL HILL
46-4 (22)

WBA Titleholder 1987-'91, 1992-'97, IBF Titleholder 1996-'97

Fans of Hill will no doubt be aghast at their man's placement in this ranking. In a sense they have a right to be. Hill's numbers as a light heavyweight champion are impressive. By the time he moved up to cruiserweight, he'd made 20 title defenses. That's a division record. It's more than twice the number Archie Moore made. It's double the number made by Michael Spinks, and half a dozen more than Bob Foster managed.

There's more: Hill split those 20 defenses evenly over two reigns. He lost the WBA title to an all-time great fighter in Thomas Hearns, regained it the following year, and picked up where he left off. What's more, he was better in his second reign.

That's the good news. Here's the bad: With a few exceptions, Hill's competition was awful. Break it down by reign: Hill's first four challengers—Rufino Angulo, Jean Emebe, Ramzi Hassan, and Willie Featherstone—were wholly ordinary. Joe Lasisi, David Vedder, Tyrone Frazier, and Mike Peak, the second group, were only slightly better. Two challengers stood out: Bobby Czyz and James Kinchen. Both were past their best days.

As a group, the challengers in Hill's second reign were better but still, on the whole, very ordinary: Adolpho Washington, Fabrice Tiozzo, Sergio Merani, Saul Montana, Guy Waters, Crawford Ashley, Drake Thadzi, Lou Del Valle. Again, there were two who stood out: Frank Tate, whom Hill beat twice, and long-reigning IBF titlist Henry Maske. Give Hill credit not only for beating Maske, but for doing it in Germany. There it is: Twenty defenses. Four credible challengers.

We can hear it now: Foster's division was terrible too. Why then is he rated so high and Hill so low? Foster was an undisputed champion who was stripped of a piece of the title and then came back and re-unified it. That Roy Jones unified will help his light heavyweight legacy too, despite the relative weakness of the division he rules. In his next to last fight at 175, against Maske, Hill unified two-thirds of the title. Not good enough. Why no fights against Dennis Andries and Jeff Harding, who kept shuffling back and forth the WBC title, or against IBF king Prince Charles Williams, or even Frankie Swindell when he was on his way up, or Michael Moorer pre-heavyweight? Hill played it safe with WBA mandatories. And one more thing: He froze against Hearns, the only great fighter he faced during his reign.

This all is said not to denigrate Hill as a fighter, but rather to put into perspective the true value of his 20 title defenses. He still makes the top 20 all-time, which is no small accomplishment. He makes it on the virtue of his longevity, his activity, and his record in championship fights. He makes it too on the basis of a hell of a pair of legs and a superb jab. This is where he belongs.

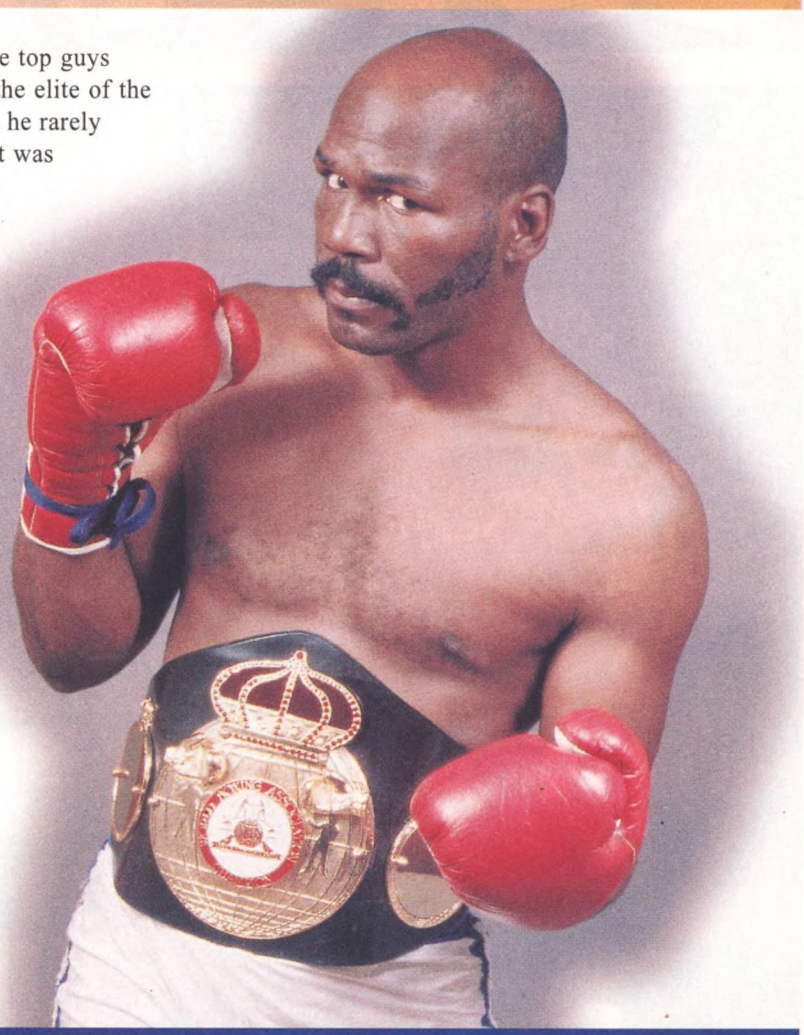
20 MARVIN JOHNSON
43-6 (35)

WBC Titleholder 1978-'79, WBA Titleholder 1979-'80, 1986-'87

Every good era has a guy who gives most of the top guys a run for their money, but just can't get past the elite of the division. He beats all the second-tier guys, but he rarely wins the big one. If he does he loses soon after. That was Johnson.

The 1970s light heavyweight division was packed at the top with outstanding fighters and though he beat most others, southpaw Johnson couldn't handle the division's very best. Twice he was outlasted and knocked out by Matthew Saad Muhammad, the second time for the WBC title. Eddie Mustafa Muhammad stopped Johnson too, for the WBA title Johnson won when he knocked out Victor Galindez, who really was done by then anyway. Spinks, the best of the era, flattened Johnson in four rounds.

Johnson kept on fighting after the loss to Spinks and in' 86, he got a shot at Leslie Stewart for his old WBA belt. He stopped Stewart in the seventh, but was stretched in the return and that was that. The era Johnson fought in was a hard one for a lot of good light heavyweights. He was better than most. ■



HONORABLE MENTIONS

Not everyone gets into the top 20. If they did, what would be the point? Here are the best of the rest, in alphabetical order:

Paul Berlenbach: "The Astoria Assassin" beat Young Stribling, Mike McTigue, and a host of other good 1920's light heavyweights.

Georges Carpentier: Forget Jack Dempsey; Carpentier topped away Levinsky and a lot of other good light heavies.

Jack Delaney: Probably the best pure boxer of his era, Delaney took three of four from Berlenbach.

Gus Lesnevich: Lesnevich fought Conn, Bivins, Charles, Maxim, and Freddie Mills. Enough said.

Lloyd Marshall: Marshall stayed right with Bivins, Moore, Maxim, and all the other greats in a great era.

Henry Maske: Maske made 10 defenses of the IBF title. The problem was they were mostly Virgil Hill retreads.

Freddie Mills: None were tougher or more willing than Mills, which probably was his undoing.

Eddie Mustafa Muhammad: If he'd only learned to let his hands go, Mustafa Muhammad might have made the top 10.

Battling Siki: Siki was as crazy as a loon, but he could fight; he crushed Carpentier for the title in 1922.

Prince Charles Williams: Williams hit the wall hard and disappeared quickly, but at his best he was excellent.

OUT OF SHAPE BOXERS

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

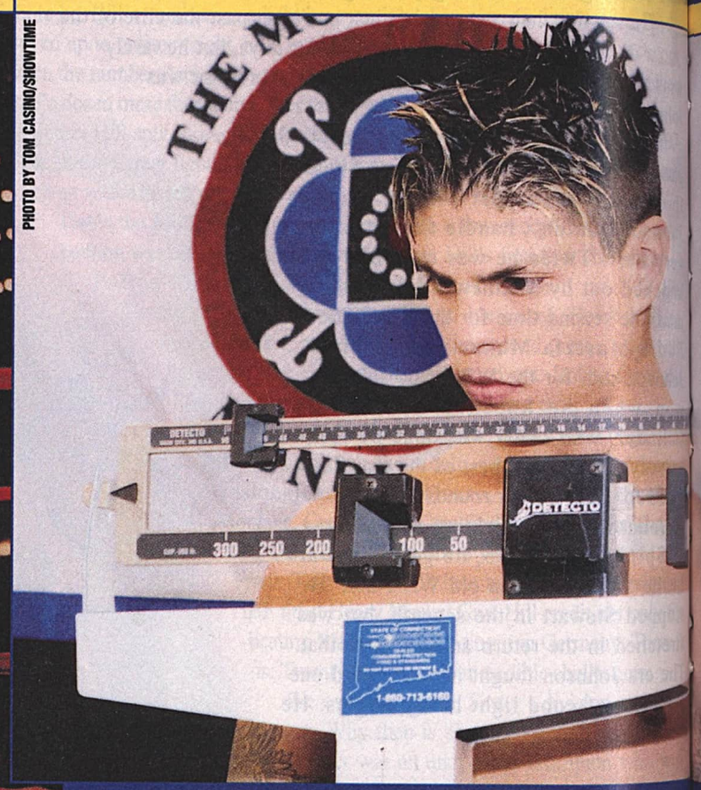


PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Hector Camacho Jr. (far left), Francisco Bojado (left), and Lennox Lewis (right) all lost fights recently that they could have won had they shown up in better shape. For Camacho and Bojado, poor preparation cost them their undefeated records, and for Lewis, it cost him the heavyweight title.

Who's To Blame And Why?

By Eric Raskin

You don't need biceps the size of grapefruits, or trapezius muscles stacked up to your ears, or abs of cobblestone to be in shape for a boxing match. Boxing is not bodybuilding, and you can't always get a read on a fighter's conditioning just by looking at his physique. But sometimes, if his build is unsightly enough, you can. If a guy's body is far enough from where it's supposed to be, it can be painfully obvious that he's out of shape.

When Hector Camacho Jr. stepped on the scale for his March 21 fight with Omar Weis in Phoenix, Arizona, the insinuations made by his overflowing belly and his stubby legs were confirmed. The scale read 147 pounds. That was four pounds over the contracted weight. It was seven pounds over the limit for Camacho's natural weight class. It was 12 pounds over the weight at which he claimed a few years ago he would win his first world title.

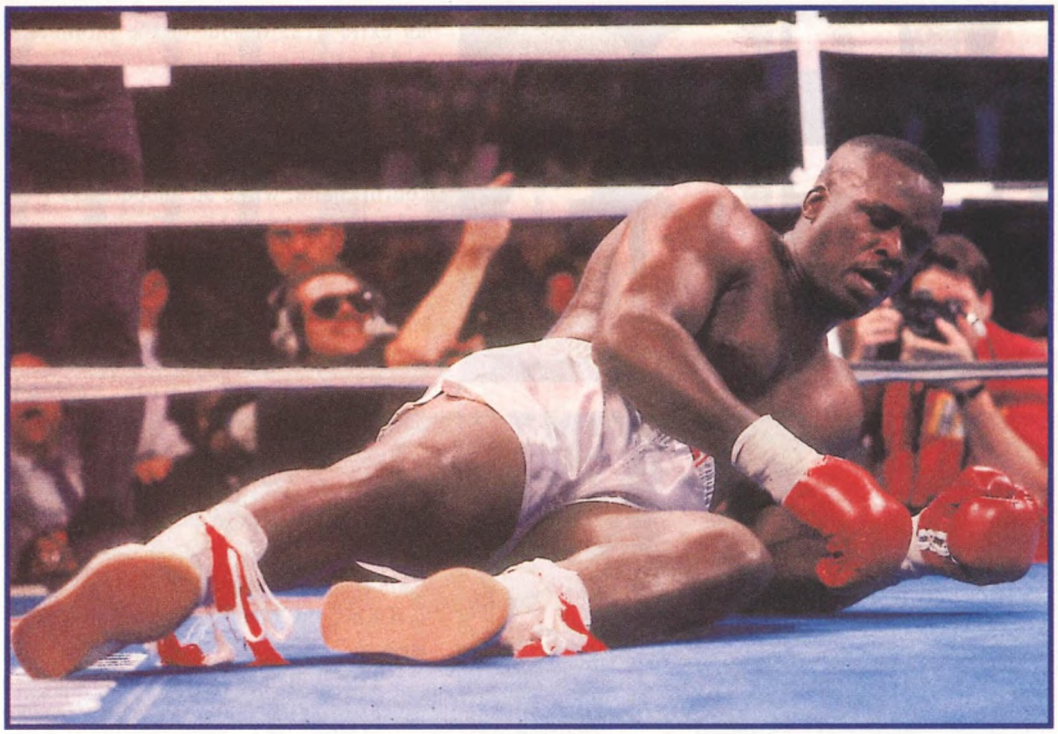
Weis, an Argentine who was anonymous until recent shaftings by the judges in nationally televised fights against well-known contenders Antonio Diaz and Ray Oliveira, weighed in at a ready 141 and demanded that Camacho lose the four pounds. Three hours later, Camacho had *gained* four pounds. It was utterly incomprehensible, unless you subscribe to the theory that he misheard all of his cronies chanting "Macho Time" and downed a plate of nachos. Whatever the case, Weis, eager to fight and confident in his abilities, squeezed an extra $12,500 out of the promoters, and the fight went ahead.

That was bad news for Camacho, whose 10-pound weight "advantage" caused him to run out of gas by the fourth round, while an encouraged Weis took the fight to him. Camacho, who arguably swept the first three rounds thanks to his superior hand speed, spent the rest of the fight retreating, holding, and, with his reflexes dulled by his shoddy fight preparation, eating a healthy dose of straight right hands. The worst efforts of referee Bobby Ferrara—a lot of the refs in pro wrestling don't tip the playing field as lopsidedly as he did—couldn't save the once-ballyhooed Camacho from suffering his first official loss, via unanimous 10-round decision.

"I lost because I didn't prepare myself," said Camacho, a reasonably humble and likeable kid when you look past his gimmickry, his negative fighting style, and the unearned opportunities he's been handed. "It's one thing when you lose a fight being fully prepared, but I know I lost because I didn't take it seriously enough."

How does that happen? How does a fighter with an undefeated record and the potential to make a lot of money not train seriously for an opponent everybody knows ranks among the two or three toughest of his career? You could say it just proves that Camacho isn't really a fighter at heart and would rather have a built-in excuse for losing than risk the harsher reality of getting beaten at his best. But that doesn't explain why it's happened to other fighters, young and old, recently and throughout boxing history.

The other example that is particularly fresh in our minds is Francisco "Panchito" Bojado, who lost his undefeated record just a month before Camacho when he showed up 9½ pounds over his best weight, fought with diminished reflexes, hand speed, and stamina, and dropped a unanimous decision to journeyman Juan Carlos Rubio. It was a shocking defeat for an 18-year-old fighter hailed as possibly the brightest prospect in all of boxing, and it brought about the question of whether today's youngsters are being coddled by their handlers and



It was 12 years ago that Buster Douglas showed up in sorry shape and surrendered the heavyweight title to Evander Holyfield. Douglas was 15 pounds heavier than in his previous fight, when he won the title from an undertrained Mike Tyson.

spoiled with fame and riches before actually proving their mettle.

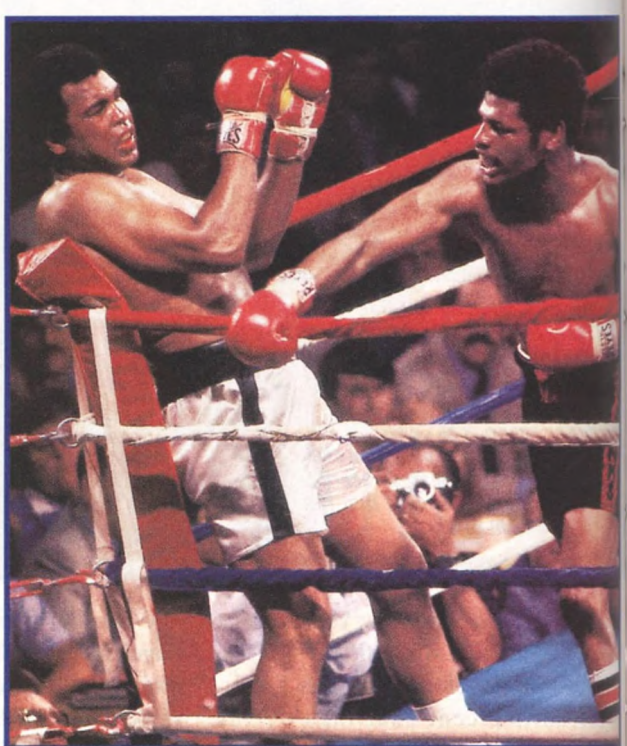
"With these young kids, it's too much, too soon," said Hall of Fame trainer and HBO expert analyst Emanuel Steward. "They're dealing with commercials, agents, sponsorships, showmanship, who's going to have the best outfit, who's going to have the best entrance music. They're dealing with seamstresses showing them robes with tassels and sequins. They're talking about, 'So-and-so just got picked up by [sports marketing company] IMG, so I have to get with IMG.' They're dealing with getting tattoos put on before the fight. The priorities are on everything except boxing.

"When a guy's winning, he thinks that winning is going to be automatic, especially against these guys that are supposed to be a few levels below. It's human nature to get a little lax, to fall into a lull of complacency. It happens to everyone, not just fighters. But you pay the price when you let it happen in boxing. Larry Merchant has a phrase I like. He says a fighter can be a 4-1 favorite, but if he doesn't train right, the odds shift right to a tossup."

Another veteran trainer, Don Turner, who is best known for his work with the always immaculately conditioned Evander Holyfield, agrees that the fighters' heads often aren't in the right place, but feels very strongly that their trainers deserve some of the blame for allowing the fighters to get away with such a lack of focus.

"Some of these trainers are just interested in the payday, and instead of teaching the fighters and training them right, they just tell the fighters what they want to hear," said Turner. "I've always been up front, and I've gotten fired for opening my mouth with a lot of guys. These trainers, like the fighters, they're from a poor background and they're looking for a way into the money. In football, or basketball, or hockey, you have to prove yourself before you can be a coach. In boxing, you just kiss the fighter's butt and if he likes you, he'll work with you. These trainers, they don't have the background or the backbone. They don't have the background to be in the corner, or the backbone to tell the truth."

In the case of Bojado, the trainer in question, Roger Bloodworth, does have a fine background—he's been training top professional fighters for the last 13 years and came up as an assistant to Hall of Fame trainer George Benton—and he has a solid excuse: This was his first fight in Panchito's corner, he had just four weeks to work with him, and Bojado, whose ideal weight is 135 pounds, weighed 170 when he came to camp. Unlike Camacho, he got down to the contract weight, but he took a lot out of himself shedding so many pounds so quickly.



Letdowns in preparing for fights happen to almost everyone, including Muhammad Ali. Losses to the likes of Leon Spinks (pictured) and Ken Norton might have been avoided if Ali had taken their challenges more seriously and trained a little harder.

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

You can see the loose flesh around Julio Cesar Chavez' midriff as he absorbs a left hand from journeyman Willy Wise. Chavez figured he could beat Wise even if he wasn't in top shape, but he ended up taking a 10-round battering and a loss that effectively ended his days as a real contender.

and at 144½, he was still too heavy to perform at his best.

"I wasn't with Panchito before camp, so I can't tell you everything that went on, but I know Panchito was very young, he had some time off, and things got out of hand," said Bloodworth. "You can be a fighter's trainer, but that doesn't mean you're sleeping with him. You're not with him 24/7.

"That said, I was proud of what I saw from Panchito in the fight. Even though his conditioning wasn't 100 percent, he fought until the last bell. He didn't run, he didn't quit. He showed his personality in that fight, and I think it will be a learning experience for him.

"I don't think we can use Panchito's age as an excuse. Boxing is a man's game. No matter what age you are, you have to be a man, you have to take responsibility. Lennox Lewis' fight in South Africa with Hasim Rahman is a prime example of how this sort of thing can happen even to an experienced fighter with an experienced corner."

Steward, Lewis' trainer, still insists that his man was not out of shape physically when he was kayoed by Rahman in the 2001 Upset of the Year. He says the only manner in which the heavyweight champ wasn't prepared for the fight was in his mental outlook, but the evidence—a career-high weight, the presence of small but noticeable "love handles," an open mouth from the sec-

(Continued on page 74)

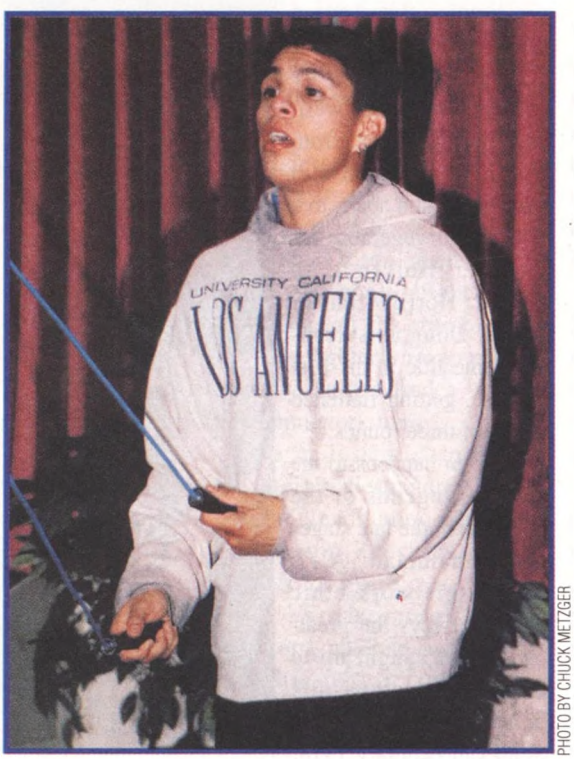


PHOTO BY CHUCK METZGER

Though this photo is only a little more than a year old, it's obvious how much thinner Bojado was when he turned pro at 132 pounds. "Panchito" needs to rededicate himself to training hard year-round if he's going to fulfill his immense promise.

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Out Of Shape

(Continued from page 73)

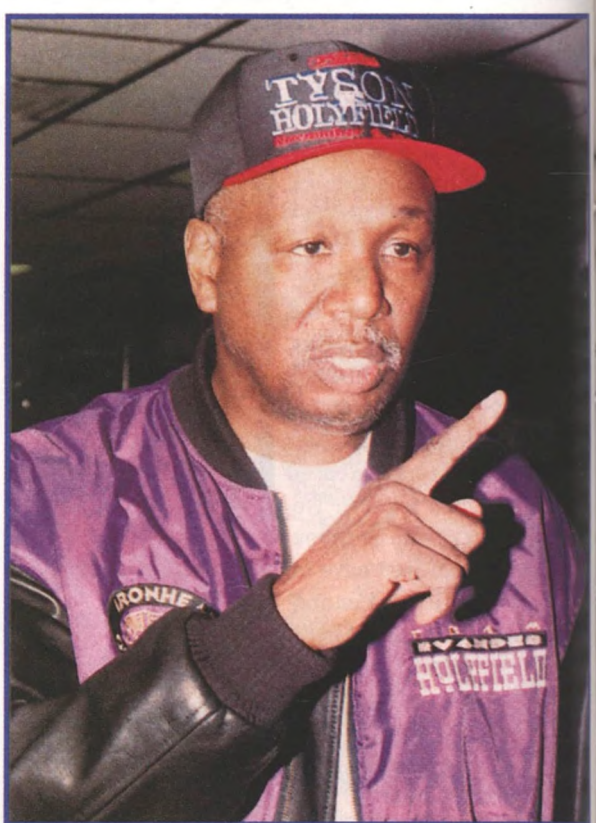
ond round on—suggest otherwise. Either way, Lewis wouldn't have been the first heavyweight champ to show up underprepared for a defense of the sport's richest prize.

One of the few heavyweight upsets more astounding than what happened to Lewis in Johannesburg was what happened to Mike Tyson in Tokyo when he met lightly regarded Buster Douglas on February 11, 1990. Tyson, distracted by a tabloid-sensation private life and bored by the ease with which he was dominating the division, was training at half-speed, looking to break camp whenever possible. There were signs of trouble when he was dropped in sparring by Greg Page, and TV cameras were there to show the world. But Iron Mike never took the task of defeating Douglas seriously, and, though his weight was only a pound or two over where it should have been, he was clearly not in peak condition and he paid the price via shocking 10th-round knockout.

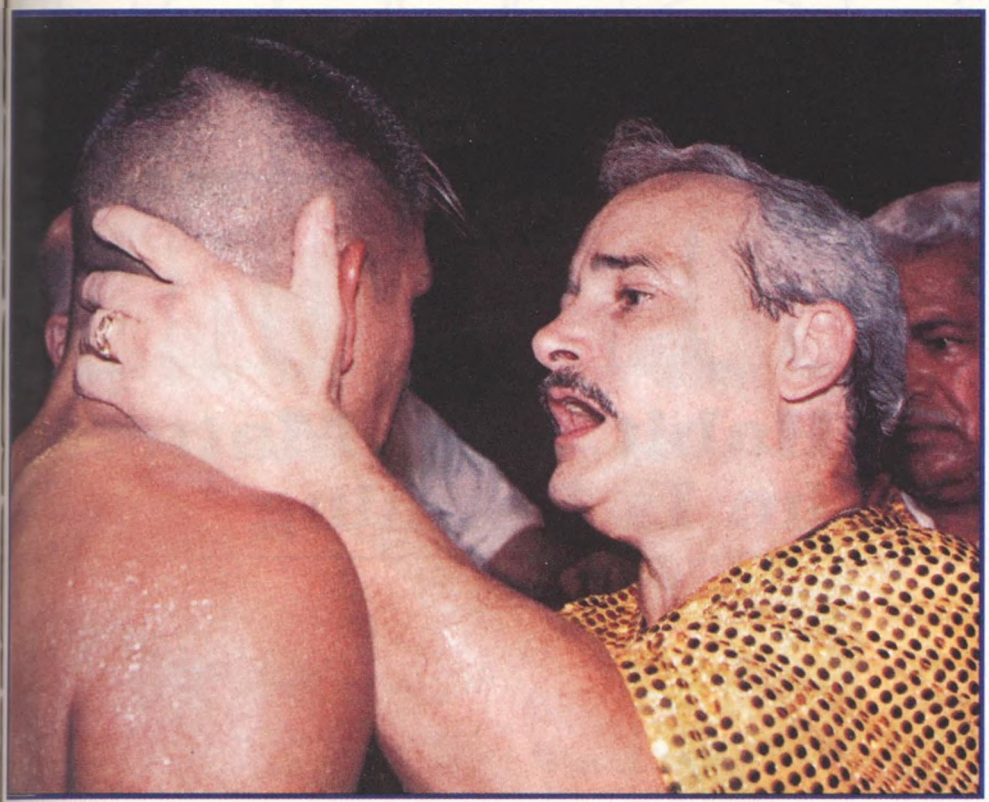
Douglas then turned right around and did Tyson one worse by growing soft and, well, just plain growing, from the 231-pound animal that tore Tyson apart, to a 246-pound vegetable for Evander Holyfield to devour. Horribly out of shape, Douglas surrendered the title in his first defense, getting flattened inside of three rounds.

It even happens to the all-time legends of the division. In the late stages of Muhammad Ali's career, his work ethic wasn't always the greatest, and it caught up to him when he lost the title in a major upset to Leon Spinks in February 1978. Just as Lewis did in the Rahman rematch, Ali showed who the better man was by getting his weight down four pounds and beating Spinks in the return. But it was a lesson Ali should have already learned, as it wasn't the first time mediocre conditioning got the better of him. He also admitted after his first fight with Ken Norton, a huge upset loss five years earlier, that his training was not what it should have been.

The list goes on and on. The great Sugar Ray Robinson was living the night life a tad too much and the gym life a tad too little when he lost the world middleweight title to Randy Turpin in 1951. Joe Louis is suspected not to have been so finely tuned when he was worn down by Max Schmeling in '36. More recently, Julio Cesar Chavez didn't drop the chalupa in time and was pitifully out of shape in losing to journeyman Willy Wise in the '99 Upset of the Year. A year later, light heavyweight champ Roy Jones struggled with Eric Harding and later blamed on it on spending too much time promoting the fight and not enough time training for it. Look at a picture of Yory Boy Campas



Veteran trainer Don Turner, who always has former heavyweight champ Evander Holyfield in terrific condition, believes that many so-called trainers are unqualified and are afraid to tell fighters the truth because they don't want to lose a payday.



Trainer Roger Bloodworth, pictured with Fernando Vargas, claims he was at a disadvantage when prepping Francisco Bojado for what turned out to be his first pro defeat. Bloodworth said junior welter Bojado came to camp four weeks before the fight weighing 170 pounds!

from one of his tuneup fights over the last few years, when he weighed as much as 180 pounds, and you may find yourself wondering when Butterbean grew black hair and a mustache.

An interesting case is heavyweight Frans Botha, who fought most of his big fights as a fleshy 230- to 240-pounder, got into awesome shape for his fights against Lewis and David Bostice (he weighed just 216 for the latter), and then weighed a full-figured 241 for his recent bout with Wladimir Klitschko, just a pound less than the towering, sculpted Ukrainian. The results have sometimes gone against logic. Despite his soft appearance, "The White Buffalo" fought well against Axel Schulz, Michael Moorer, Mike Tyson, and Shannon Briggs; against Lewis, he got pelted in two rounds, and against the ordinary Bostice, he struggled to win a controversial decision. Then he lasted eight rounds with Klitschko despite battling the flu in the last days before the fight.

"I definitely believe you can be heavy and still be in great shape," said Botha. "I was in great shape against Lewis, and obviously my result there was not so good. But if I do lose because I'm not in shape, then it's my fault. I think all of the blame is on the fighter. He's got himself to blame, because it's his career. Hector Camacho Jr. is a great fighter, he has a lot of ability, and if he loses to a less talented guy, it's his fault.

"You can understand why a trainer lets it happen. The trainer wants to keep a fighter happy because he doesn't want to lose his job. There's too much money involved. So some people might place some of the blame on the trainer, but ultimately it's the fighter's responsibility to get in shape and to find a trainer who will make him work hard."

That's more or less what popular junior middleweight Fernando Vargas did a couple of years ago, when he enlisted Washington Redskins conditioning coach John Philbin to lend a hand in camp. Vargas, more so than most elite fighters, has had a different physique for his major fights (Ike Quartey, Felix Trinidad) than for some of his lesser opponents (Ross Thompson, Wilfredo Rivera), and since the scare against Rivera, he says he's dedicated himself to being in top shape for every fight from now on. We'll have to wait and see about that. But certainly, the training camps that have included Philbin have produced results (even though he lost to Trinidad, Vargas' stamina was superb), raising the issue of whether guys like Bojado or Camacho might be well served getting their own fitness gurus.

"Conditioning coaches are good if the fighter believes in them," said Bloodworth, who serves as an assistant trainer to Vargas. "I learned a long time ago that if a fighter believes in something, then it can help him. But if you don't believe in it, then you aren't going to do everything the guy tells you to do and it isn't going to help you. If Panchito wants a conditioning coach, then I feel he should get one. But only if he really wants one. Different things work for different fighters."

Maybe for Bojado, he doesn't need to change his training routine, he just needs to curb his indulgences between fights. Maybe for Camacho, he just doesn't have the passion for boxing to ever whip himself into serious shape, and no amount of upset losses or changes to his corner will ever amend that. Maybe for Lewis, who usually trains with singleminded intensity, he just needed to learn a lesson, and it will never happen again.

In fact, for those who see the silver lining and not just the cloud, maybe fighters the world over will learn a lesson from what's been happening recently and will make adjustments before it happens to them.

"One good thing about what happened to Bojado and Camacho is other young kids are catching what's going on," said Steward. "In light of all this happening, it might have a positive effect on some kids."

Not to mention on some trainers, managers, promoters, network executives, and assorted butt-kissers, who all too often worry about what's best for themselves before considering what's best for their fighters. ■

SMOKIN' RICARDO MAYORGA

The Only Habit That Matters To Him Is Winning

By Joe Santoliquito

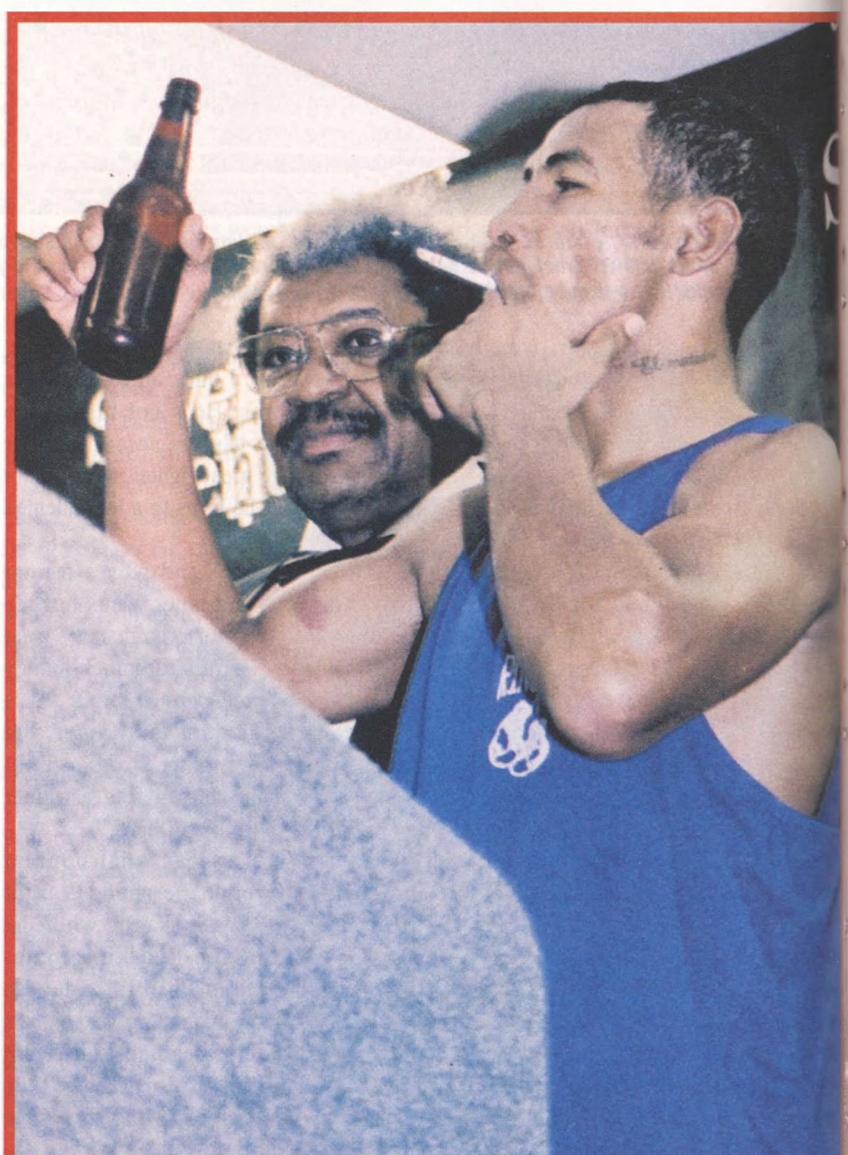
Moments after winning the WBA welterweight title, Ricardo Mayorga was a walking ad campaign for everything a titleholder *shouldn't* do. He had to have a cigarette after submitting his urine sample, then continued puffing away as he entered the press conference following his impressive victory over Andrew "Six Heads" Lewis.

Mayorga didn't care, just like he didn't care about taking punches from the dangerous Lewis. Behind the podium, Mayorga kept inhaling nicotine, and was even handed a beer—the true nectar of champions. For Mayorga, though, it was nothing new. He has been smoking and drinking beer since he was 11, around the same time he began boxing.

It's all part of Mayorga's unique training regimen: hard sparring with men 15 to 20 pounds heavier than him, a few gulps of beer, and a smoke or two while his trainers aren't looking.

His confidence borders on arrogance, but he has unquestionable punching power, along with an unquenchable thirst for living. Don King jokes that they found Mayorga in a bar. What the Hall of Fame promoter may have found is the most entertaining welterweight in the world, and possibly one of the best, based on Mayorga's mild upset of Lewis via fifth-round stoppage before 3,920 fans at the Sovereign Center, in Reading, Pennsylvania.

"You have to dissuade Mayorga of



The end of a perfect day: Mayorga celebrates his title-winning victory with a beer and a cigarette, much to the bemusement of promoter Don King. The new WBA welterweight titleholder is an outrageous character who is guaranteed to enliven the 147-pound division with his antics.

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Mayorga swings for the fences with virtually every punch he throws. Defending titlist Andrew "Six Heads" Lewis barely avoided this right-hand bomb, but was on the receiving end of a pair of thunderous rights in the fifth round that ended his reign.

these type of bad habits," said King, with his familiar bellowing laugh. "He don't want to change right now, because he was raised on drinking beer and smoking. It ain't fit, but it ain't novel. 'Two-Ton' Tony Galento used to drink beer all of the time, before Joe Louis gave him a little burp. The Latins march to different drummers. He can celebrate all he wants now. He can have a beer, a cigarette, a Corvette, and a watch. There's no doubt about Mayorga being a man's man, and he can punch like hell."

The Lewis victory catapulted "El Matador" into the upper echelon of the welterweight class, just below undisputed champion Vernon Forrest and Shane Mosley. It also introduced the boxing world to someone altogether different when it comes to preparing for a fight.

Mayorga, 24-3-1 (22) with 1 no-contest, beat Lewis on what was essentially four weeks of training. El Matador had incurred a few injuries during camp, and was making life difficult for his trainers, Rigoberto Garibaldi and Al Bonanni, often ignoring their suggestions, and wandering off like a teenage girl sneaking out of her bedroom window after midnight.

The 29-year-old Mayorga's zest for life almost led to his downfall in the ring. That's when Hector Perez was called in to rescue him. The veteran trainer, and lately King's top relief man, having salvaged the once-flagging career of WBA junior flyweight titlist Rosendo Alvarez, was making plans to throw a big birthday party for his wife at his home in Texas when he was sent to do some babysitting/honing for Mayorga.

"Don King called me in because there were problems," said Perez. "When I got to the training camp, I told everyone I did not know what the problems were, nor was I going to ask any questions about the problems. All I wanted to know was if we were going to work together and work hard, or I was going back home.

"We got together, we put together a work plan. We had to work on different things immediately. Mayorga doesn't have balance. He needs a lot of work, but like Mayorga says, 'I didn't have marbles, I played with rocks growing up.' Mayorga is real tough; he's really strong. Just with that, we worked on his speed, we worked on his combinations and balance, and the guy listened to me."

The plan involved getting the southpaw Lewis, 21-1-1 (19) with 1 no-contest, out within the first three rounds, despite Mayorga's poor history against lefties. As an amateur, Mayorga lost to six lefthanders, finding it difficult to adjust to their awkward style and the strange angles from which they threw punches.

"The uppercuts were something we

PHOTO BY MIKE GRELLHILL

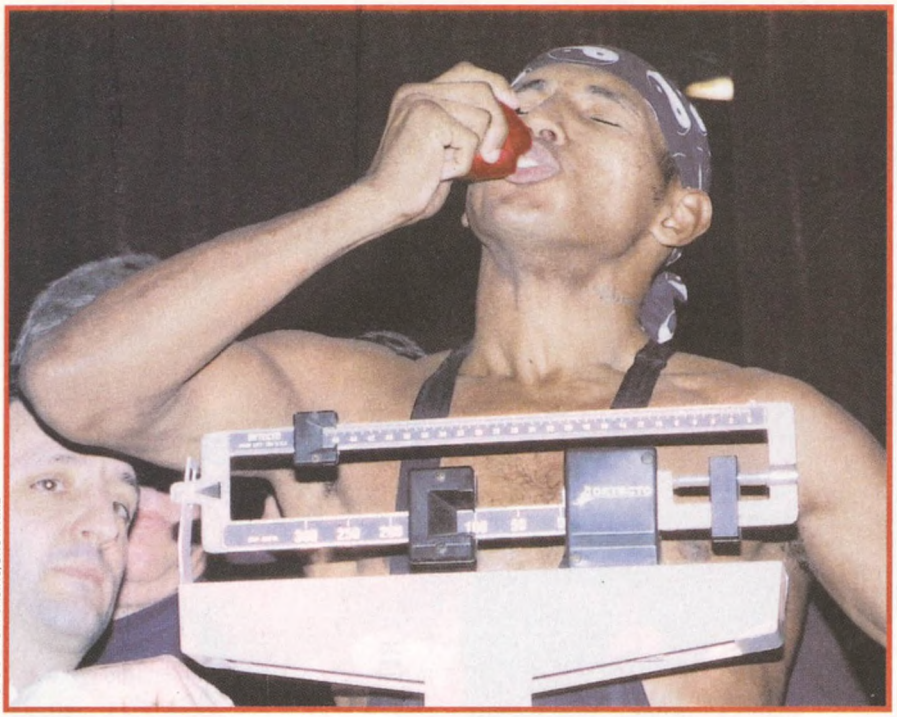


PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

The taste of success: Mayorga began taunting Lewis at the weigh-in, eating an apple on the scales while his opponent struggled to make weight. Intimidation is a big part of Mayorga's game.

felt Mayorga could use, but he just has a problem with using it way outside," Perez said. "We worked on that, like we did working on him fighting as a southpaw. But in four weeks, we can only do so much. Besides, once the bell rings, Ricardo was going to do what he likes to do.

"Between rounds, Ricardo mumbled to me, 'I want to show him I can take a punch.' I yelled at him, 'Don't do that, don't place yourself in that situation.' Then he came back to the corner another round and said, 'I want to show him how strong I am.' The way Mayorga thinks, he thinks he can walk through walls, so I told him during the fight, 'Are you loco? Are you crazy?' He told me, 'I'm going to do it, Hector. I'm going to show everyone I can take his punch.'

"So I played the game. We used some child psychology on him. We wanted Six Heads to stay there. We didn't want him to move at all. We told Mayorga to let Six Heads do whatever he wanted to do to you, then catch him at the same time and throw combinations. Mayorga actually wanted the fight to go a little longer, so people could see on TV that he could take a punch. He did his job overall, so I'm pleased with what happened. I just helped the kid out, that's it."

Mayorga hasn't received too much help from anyone in his life. Wipe away all the bravado, and Mayorga is just a momma's boy. He sobbed like a baby in Perez' arms a few times during training camp, complaining about injuries he thought would jeopardize the fight. The rugged man with "El Matador" tattooed on his neck would stay on the phone for hours with his mother, whom he sent breakfast every morning during their stay in Reading.

He comes from a very impoverished area of Managua, Nicaragua. Streets were rife with seedy elements and trash. Young girls of 13 and 14 were prostituting themselves, looking to make a dollar any way they could. A not-uncommon scene in some areas of the embattled South American country, according to Mayorga, was of young women giving birth in the middle of a dirty street with no medical attention.

He and his six siblings would huddle into their small house, trying to make the best of a difficult situation. Material objects that most middle-class Americans consider commonplace were rare. Mayorga doesn't forget. That's why he quickly remembered a promise one of his handlers made about Mayorga getting a $1,500 watch if he won the Lewis

Referee Rudy Battle counts out Lewis in the fifth. The previously undefeated Lewis was on his feet by the count of six, but failed to respond when Battle twice asked him if he wanted to continue.

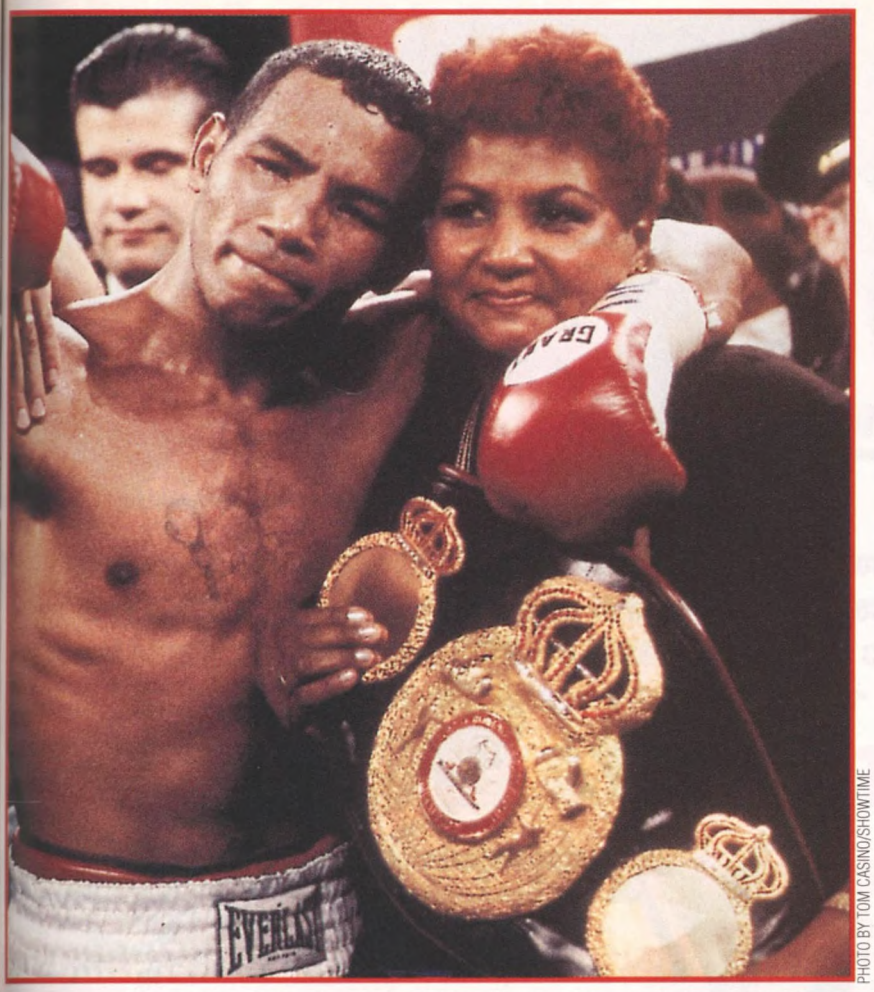


PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Mayorga shares his moment of triumph with his mother, the person he credits with giving him his zest for life. Now he intends to buy her a new house.

fight. Like a baby reaching for a pacifier, Mayorga grabbed the watch off his cornerman's wrist after the fight and put it on right there in the ring over his taped left hand.

"I've been poor all of my life, and that's what makes me strong," Mayorga said through translator Perez. "We lived in a very small house, and a poor house, but it was clean. We were very proud of the house we lived in, but now, I want to take my mother out of that house. I want to buy a house for her.

"I was always happy, though. My mother made me like that. She'd smile at me, and I'd smile back. I was always happy, but now I'm much happier. I don't really have to concentrate on anything; I just go out and fight. It doesn't really matter what my condition is; I just go out and fight. I'll need to fight to get what I want."

Mayorga was always fighting. In the streets, in the schools, everywhere. If there wasn't a fight, Mayorga would start one.

"Now I'll do the fighting in the ring, no longer in the streets," Mayorga said. "Now I'm living a better life, a good life."

King was almost as giddy as El Matador over his winning the WBA belt. Mayorga's victory not only gave King a bit of a foothold in the welterweight race, but it also provided the loquacious promoter with a chance to put his foot somewhere else after the bout. Lewis fought under King's banner at one time, before making the switch to King's arch-rival, Bob Arum—a bad move in King's mind.

The 70-year-old King must have felt like he was in his 20s walking the streets of Cleveland again when he got into the ring after the fight. King almost had to be restrained from going after the dejected Lewis, letting the former WBA titlist know he shouldn't have left him.

(Continued on page 80)

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Ricardo Mayorga

(Continued from page 79)

"I was happy Mayorga won," King said. "It gave me a special sense of pride that he knocked this guy out, who I had taken care of like a son for six years, and then he defected. Lewis was sent to me in total destitution, and he wouldn't have even been fighting for the title or been ranked number one. He turned his back on me. His management misled him. This was a major victory for me.

"I never get emotional about a prize fight, but I did on this one. Lewis is a traitor. I took him from abject poverty out of Guyana, did everything for him, and supported him. Then he ran over to Bob. This is disloyalty at the highest form. I never opened my mouth about it before. This was vindication. I am more elated to win this fight than anyone."

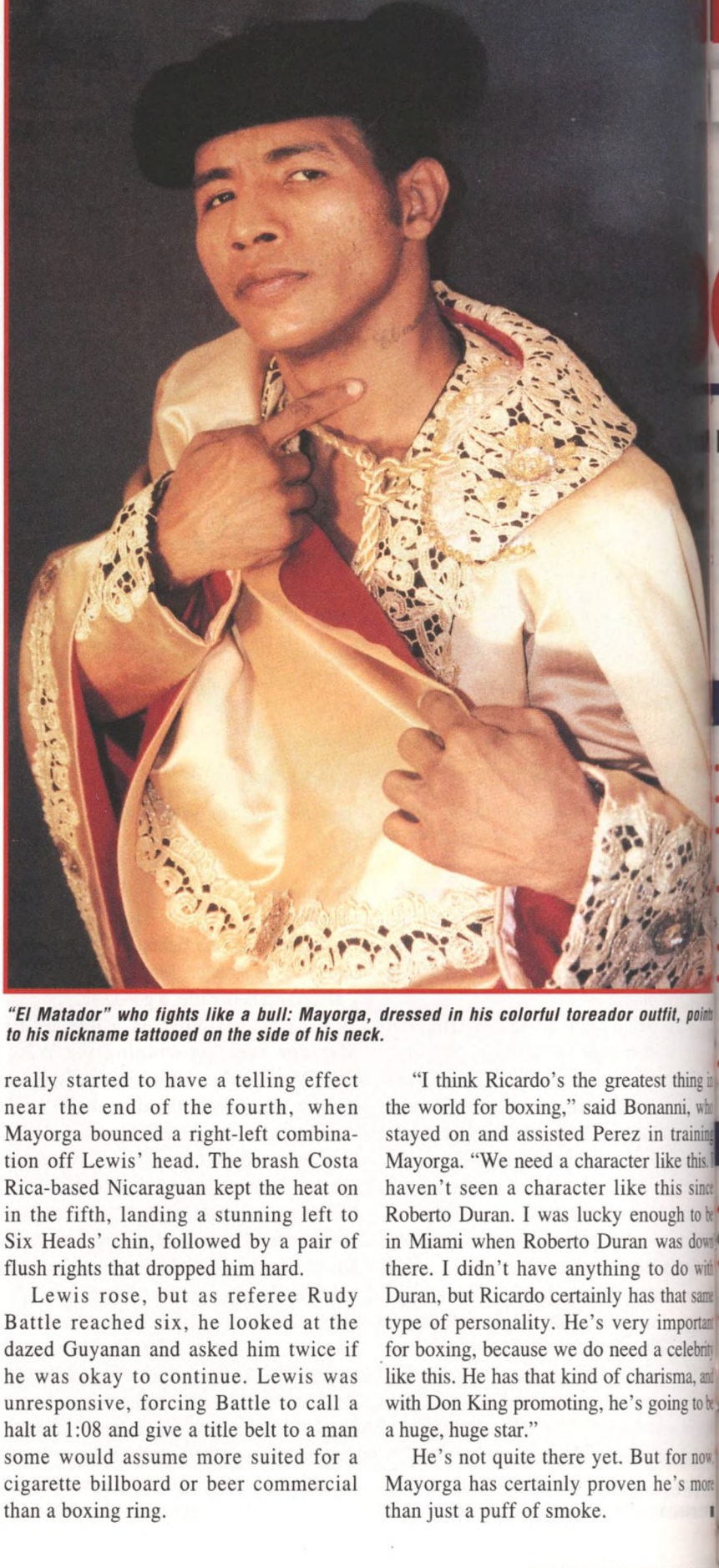
King's venom toward Arum and Lewis was rivaled pretty strongly by the venom between Mayorga and Lewis, who wanted each other so fiercely that, at the start of the second round, they charged at one another like pit bulls—before the bell even sounded.

They had fought to a no-contest back on July 28, 2001, in Los Angeles, with the bout being stopped early in the second round due to nasty cuts above both of Lewis' eyes caused by an accidental headbutt. They staged a fierce war of words leading up to the rematch. Mayorga was so sure he'd win, he was willing to bet anyone $50,000 that he would knock Lewis out. Mayorga's style and manner had many comparing him to a young Roberto Duran. He even insisted that he once knocked out a horse, just as legend has it Duran did.

But talking and posturing don't win fights; Mayorga had to back it up in the ring. Although judges Robert Grasso and Lynn Carter each had the fight even at 38-38 after four rounds, and judge Guillermo Perez gave Mayorga only a slight 39-38 edge at the time of the knockout, El Matador was clearly landing the heavier shots.

Mayorga was hit a number of times, but kept coming at Lewis. The pressure really started to have a telling effect near the end of the fourth, when Mayorga bounced a right-left combination off Lewis' head. The brash Costa Rica-based Nicaraguan kept the heat on in the fifth, landing a stunning left to Six Heads' chin, followed by a pair of flush rights that dropped him hard.

Lewis rose, but as referee Rudy Battle reached six, he looked at the dazed Guyanan and asked him twice if he was okay to continue. Lewis was unresponsive, forcing Battle to call a halt at 1:08 and give a title belt to a man some would assume more suited for a cigarette billboard or beer commercial than a boxing ring.



"El Matador" who fights like a bull: Mayorga, dressed in his colorful toreador outfit, points to his nickname tattooed on the side of his neck.

"I think Ricardo's the greatest thing in the world for boxing," said Bonanni, who stayed on and assisted Perez in training Mayorga. "We need a character like this. I haven't seen a character like this since Roberto Duran. I was lucky enough to be in Miami when Roberto Duran was down there. I didn't have anything to do with Duran, but Ricardo certainly has that same type of personality. He's very important for boxing, because we do need a celebrity like this. He has that kind of charisma, and with Don King promoting, he's going to be a huge, huge star."

He's not quite there yet. But for now, Mayorga has certainly proven he's more than just a puff of smoke.

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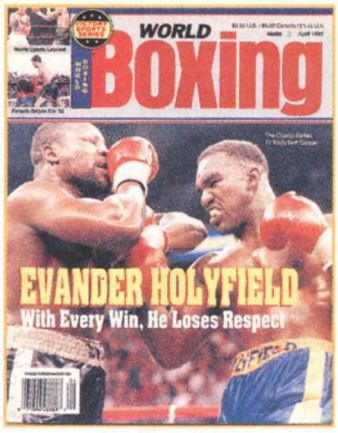

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David Tua KO 9 Fres Oquendo
Lance Whitaker D 10 Ray Austin
Michael Grant KO 5 Joe Lenart
O'Neil Bell KO 2 Ka-Dy King
Brian Nielsen W 8 Uriah Grant
Jeremy Williams KO 1 David Bostice
Joe Mesi KO 6 Keith McKnight
Attila Levin W 10 Ron Guerrero
Sherman Williams W 10 Samson Po'uha
Tony Tubbs KO 2 Michael Shanks
Saul Montana KO 7 China Smith
Michael Holden W 6 Luke Simpkin
Sedreck Fields W 6 Willie Palms
Dominick Guinn KO 2 Derrick Berry
Paolo Vidoz KO 5 Alessandro Guni
DaVarryl Williamson KO 3 Abdul Muhaymin
DaVarryl Williamson KO 1 Ed White
Derek Bryant KO 5 Lovy Page
Peter Okhello KO 2 Tone Fiso
Wade Lewis KO 4 Jeff Pegues
Owen Beck KO 1 Chavez Francisco
Josue Blocus KO 3 Albert Stewart
Jean Bergeron KO 3 Marcellus Brown
Brian Nix W 6 Phil Jackson
James Walton W 6 Harold Sconiers
Michael Bennett KO 4 Bobby Scoggins
Audley Harrison KO 2 Julius Long

CRUISERWEIGHTS

Johnny Nelson KO 8 Ezra Sellers
Jason Robinson KO 9 Mark Peters
George Jones KO 3 Karl Willis
Buster Keeton W 12 Butch Lesley
Turan Bagci KO 1 Melusi Khoza
Guillermo Jones W 10 Tim Williamson
Alton Rice KO 4 William Bailey
Earl Morais D 12 Burgerd Theunissen
Jermal Barnes W 10 Hector Sanjurjo
Michael Simms KO 4 Tracy Barrios

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS

Dariusz Michalczewski KO 2
Joey DeGrandis
Derrick Harmon W 10 Glencoffe Johnson
Demetrius Jenkins KO 7 Frankie Liles
Silvio Branco W 6 Ramdane Serdjane
Rasheed Lee W 10 Etianne Whitaker
Elvis Michailenko KO 5 Hastings Rasani
Danny Santiago W 10 Tyrus Armstead
Dennis McKinney KO 1 J.B. Parker
Elvir Muriqi KO 1 Mike Coker

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Joe Calzaghe W 12 Charles Brewer
Antwun Echols W 12 Kabary Salem
Anthony Mundine KO 8 Roland Francis
Jaffa Ballogou KO 11 Henry Porras
Scott Pemberton KO 3 Lloyd Bryan
Mario Veit KO 7 Gabor Halacz
Jurgen Brahmer KO 3 Francesco Lares
Freeman Barr W 8 Ojay Abrahams
Matthew Barney W 12 Hussein Osman
Danny Batchelder KO 3 Roosevelt Walker
Jeff Lacy W 10 Bobby Jones
Danny Green KO 8 Paul Smallman
Joe Hughes KO 3 Eric Howard
Oscar Bravo KO 3 John Moore
Yusaf Mack KO 1 Morgan Wilson

MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Harry Simon W 12 Armand Krajnc
Antonio Perugino KO 2 Mohamed Boutalakh
Evans Ashira W 12 Francisco Mora
Tony Dodson W 8 Brian Barbosa
Kenny Ellis W 10 Kippy Warren
Cleveland Corder W 10 Robert Stowell
Brandon Mitchum Tech. Win 4
Rito Ruvalcaba
Eric Regan KO 4 Juan Carlos Barreto
Dirk Dzemski KO 3 Orhan Ajvazoski
Ottavio Barone KO 2 Horacio Carranza

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Roman Karmazin W 8 Sergei Tatevosyan
Danny Perez KO 8 Pedro Ortega
Rafael Pineda KO 4 Jose Chiquillo
Verno Phillips KO 5 Christian Lloyd Joseph
Ross Thompson KO 1 Ron Johnson
Yuri Tsarenko W 12 Gary Lockett
Paolo Roberto KO 3 Ron Pasek
Kuvanych Toygonbayev KO 8 Ron Weaver
Akira Ohigashi KO 4 Seunguep Kim
Germaine Sanders W 8 Andre Trunov
Freddie Cuevas KO 7 Charles Murray
Jimmy Lange W 8 Gerald Reed
Billy Johnson KO 3 Ervin Fuller
Peter Manfredo Jr. W 8 Grady Brewer

WELTERWEIGHTS

Ricardo Mayorga KO 5 Andrew Lewis
(Wins WBA Title)
Michele Piccirillo W 12 Cory Spinks
(Wins Vacant IBF Title)
Thomas Damgaard W 8 Abdelhakim Mehdi

Vince Phillips W 10 Nick Acevedo
Michele Orlando KO 5 Turgay Uzun
Michel Trabant W 12 Christian Bladt
Neil Sinclair KO 4 Fillip Bystrinov
Jyri Kjall Tech. Win 10 Monney Seka
Edwin Cassiani KO 3 Luis Collazo
Manard Reed W 6 Dale Clary
Omar Davila W 6 Awell Aubulai
Mohamad Abdulaev W Disq. 9 Joel Salas

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS

Sharmba Mitchell W 10 Bernard Harris
Ener Julio W 10 Luis Cardozo
Stephen Smith W 12 Rocky Martinez
Michael Clark KO 4 Mickel Orr
Mikhail Krivolapov KO 4 Nikolai Bezenkov
Souleyman Mbaye W 8 Colin Mayisela
Fernando Mena W 10 Wayne Boudreaux
Eleazar Contreras W 8 Jaime Morales
Bradley Pryce KO 8 Daffyd Carlin
Fred Cadena KO 2 Jerome McLean
Kelson Pinto KO 1 Mauro Lucero

LIGHTWEIGHTS

Floyd Mayweather W 12 Jose Luis Castillo
(Wins Vacant World Title)
Stevie Johnston W 12 Alejandro Gonzalez
Julien Lorcy KO 4 Ahmed Merichiche
Julian Wheeler W 10 Isidro Tejedor
Efren Hinojosa W 12 Ernie Zavala
Jose Luis Juarez W 10 Lovemore Ndou
Billy Irwin W 10 Chad Brisson
Sayan Sanchat KO 3 Ivan Andryakov
Martin O'Malley W 8 Rudy Lunsford
Alberto DeJesus Trinidad KO 2
Walter Blake
Cristian Bejarano W 6 Reuben Galvan
Paul Malignaggi W 4 Sterling Gethers

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS

Yodsanan Nanthachai W 12 Lakva Sim
(Wins Vacant WBA Title)
Sirimongkol Singmanassak KO 3
Isagani Pumar
Cassius Baloyi KO 6 Tiger Ari
Daniel Alicea W 12 Brian Adams
David Toledo W 8 Phillip Payne
Gary St. Clair KO 12 James Swan
Wilfredo Vazquez KO 2
Julio Cesar Cardona
Rocky Cassiani W 10 Jorge Munoz
Alex Moon KO 8 Mick O'Malley

FEATHERWEIGHTS

Oscar Leon W 12 John Michael Johnson
Injin Chi KO 3 Samuel Duran
Istvan Kovacs KO 3 Steve Trumble
Zahir Raheem W 12 Joe Morales
Roger Medal W 10 Edelmiro Martinez

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Super middleweight Joe Calzaghe crunches Charles Brewer with a left

Lewis Wood W 8 Richard Savage
Rachid Bouaita W 10 Johnny Begue
Jose Aguiniga KO 2 Fidel Hernandez

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS

Heriberto Ruiz W 10 Trinidad Mendoza
Bobby Boy Velardez W Disq. 9
Diego Morales
Ricardo Medina W 12 Gilbert Corrales
Michael Alldis W 12 Brian Carr
Sal Garcia KO 6 Lester Fuentes
Manabu Fukushima KO 7 Arnel Barotillo
Setsuo Segawa KO 3 Keiji Yamaguchi
Napapol Kiatisakchokchai KO 1
Joseph Paden
Fahprakorb Rakkiatgym KO 2
Mohammed Cifota
Akihiro Kanai KO 5 Shinji Kawahara
Yongin Cho W 10 Jaime Barcelona
Turcay Kaya W 8 Karim Ketoun

BANTAMWEIGHTS

Johnny Bredahl KO 9 Eidy Moya
(Wins WBA Title)
Veerapol Sahaprom KO 4 Joel Sungahed
(Non-Title Bout)
Genaro Garcia KO 2 Ever Fernandez
Hugo Dianzo W 12 Jose Laureano
Ricardo Vargas Tech. Win 7
Jhonny Gonzalez
Hidenobu Honda KO 3 Namchai Puntep
David Guerault W 8 Frederic Patrac
Jess Maca W 12 Hiroaki Murakoshi
Gerardo Martinez W 10 Arturo Valenzuela
Poonsawat Kratingdanggym KO 3
Joel Junio
Steve Molitor KO 3 Teofilo Manueta
Jose Navarro KO 4 Adrian Cuevas

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS

Felix Machado Tech. Win 6 Martin Castillo
(Retains IBF Title)
Samson Toyota-Thailand W 12
Alfren Bulala
Pedro Alcazar KO 4 Alfredo Toro
Eiji Kojima W 12 Hayato Asai
Lunga Ntontela W 12 Abbey Mnisi
Katsushige Kawashima W 10
Shingo Sasaki

FLYWEIGHTS

Pongsaklek Wonjongkam KO 1
Daisuke Naito
(Retains WBC Title)
Beibis Mendoza W 8 Manny Melchor
Peter Culshaw KO 2 Sergei Tasimov
Medgoen Singsurat W 6 Rolly Maldahinnog
Denkaosan Kaovichit W 12 Sukarno Banjao
Steffen Noerskov W 12 Franck Gorjux

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS

Wendyl Janiola W 10 Saman Sorjaturong
Fahlan Sakkreerin KO 4 Charles Masali
Mhikiza Myekeni W 12 Jose Garcia
Hirokazu Takahashi KO 1 Ittarit Nationman
Liborio Romero KO 3 Filiberto Andrade

STRAWWEIGHTS

Jaewon Kim W 12 Hiroshi Nakajima
Namchai Ratanachaigym KO 4 Oris Mbityi
Pornsawan Porpramook KO 5 Sonny Boco
Omar Soto KO 2 Alejo Galindo
Decho Bankluaygym W 6 Rudy Andaho

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PRESENTS

The RING

FIGHTER of the MONTH

The two leading candidates for Fighter of the Month honors this time around were both welterweights who scored career-best wins and captured title belts. But as impressive as Antonio Margarito was in scoring a 10th-round stoppage of Antonio Diaz, he was outdone slightly by Ricardo Mayorga, who needed half as many rounds to wipe out the previously undefeated Andrew Lewis, ruining possible summer fights for "Six Heads" with Vernon Forrest or Sugar Shane Mosley.

Mayorga, the cigarette-smoking, beer-guzzling, wild-swinging Nicaraguan switch-hitter, came from out of nowhere when he gave Lewis all he could handle for three minutes, seven seconds last July—before a clash of heads led to a no-contest. This time, the fighters were more careful with their heads, but Lewis couldn't get out of the way of Mayorga's fists, and a five-punch combination punctuated by two rights to the chin stretched Six Heads in the fifth.

Now Mayorga is in the Forrest/Mosley sweepstakes. Most believe he's not on the level of those two; perhaps we'll get to find out. But in a division where all other the big guns come off rather vanilla in the personality department, the wild and crazy Mayorga is not only the Fighter of the Month, but a much-needed Flavor of the Month as well.

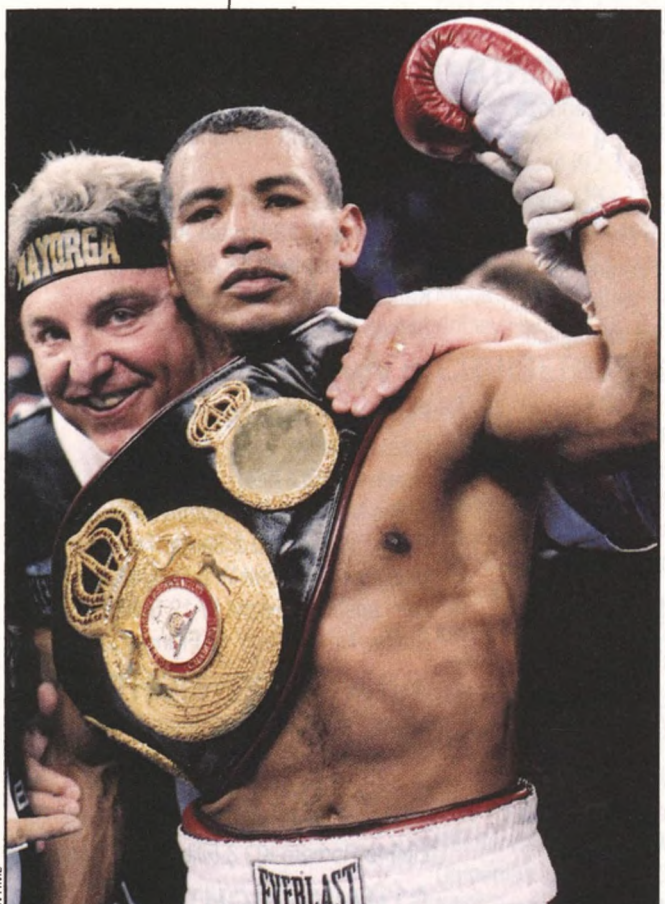

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Ricardo Mayorga

RINGSIDE REPORTS

Antonio Margarito KO 10 Antonio Diaz

Las Vegas, Nevada: Margarito knew Diaz would charge him like a bull shortly after the bell sounded to begin their 12-round welterweight fight at Bally's Event Center. And Margarito showed he knew how to handle the bull rush. Margarito parlayed an effective jab and a straight right that turned out to have more oomph than anyone could have imagined into a 10th round stoppage of Diaz. The end came at 2:17 of the round when Diaz's brother, Joel, threw in the towel and referee Jay Nady (USA) halted the action.

It was the biggest win of Margarito's career, and it thrust him squarely into the title picture in the welterweight division.

"I fought my heart out, because I know the kind of fighter he is," Margarito said. "I fought my best fight, but I had to if I wanted to win."

Margarito, 146½, Tijuana, Mexico, seemed to control the fight with his jab and his movement, but Diaz' persistence and indomitable spirit kept it close. The 25-year-old from Coachella, California, never backed down and, despite swallowing plenty of his own blood over the second half of the fight, kept looking for the shot that would turn the fight around.

All three judges favored Margarito through the nine completed rounds. Dave Moretti (USA) had it 86-85, while both Clark Sammartino (USA) and Jerry Roth (USA) scored it 87-84, the same as THE RING'S scorecard.

Diaz, 147, needed the win to jumpstart his career, which had been on a slight downward spiral after a spanking he took at the hands of Shane Mosley in November '00. Though Diaz was unbeaten in the interim until facing Margarito, he was starting to look shop-worn.

But Diaz insisted he would be ready and, true to his word, he made Margarito fight every minute of every round. Gameness, though, was no match for the 23-year-old Margarito's decided edge in quickness and lateral movement. He was able to create angles that made it hard for Diaz to land his best stuff, all the while popping the jab in his face.

The end came suddenly in the 10th, even though Diaz' eyes were swelling and blood was oozing from both his nose and his mouth. Margarito, after a good flurry, connected with a left uppercut that dropped Diaz to one knee.

When he got up, Margarito, 26-3 (18) with 1 no-contest, pinned Diaz, 37-4 (28), on the ropes and fired away. That prompted Joel Diaz to climb onto the ring apron and halt the carnage.

"He's disappointed, but I did the right thing," Joel Diaz said. "There's no doubt. I had to stop it when I did. There are other fights."

The win puts Margarito in the mix with the other top welterweights, including Vernon Forrest, Shane Mosley, and Ricardo Mayorga. Margarito, though, wanted to savor the Diaz win before thinking of the next battle.

"He is a tough guy and any win over him is a good win," Margarito said.

Television: Showtime
Promoter: Top Rank
(3-16-02)
Kevin Iole

Daniel Santos KO 11 Yory Boy Campas

Las Vegas, Nevada: The talk before and after the fight was all about what Santos doesn't do: He doesn't punch hard, he doesn't take a punch, he doesn't stand and fight. But all that talk obscured the most important thing that he does do: He wins.

In the most high-profile fight of his career so far, Santos found a way to win, making former 154-pound titlist Campas quit in the 11th round after opening a gash over the Mexican's right eye with a straight left hand.

Santos was winning virtually every round the same way, circling the ring and flicking out a jab that was hardly piston-like, but was enough to slice up the already tender skin around Campas' eyes. Campas, seeing his own blood, decided he had had enough and walked away, forcing referee Joe Cortez (USA) to stop it at 1:36 of the 11th.

Campas, 153½, had endured a thorough beating and his only way to win was by catching Santos and landing a bomb. When he became convinced he couldn't do that, he used the excuse of the cut as a way to get out of the ring.

"I couldn't see. I just couldn't see the punches," Campas said.

He was probably as frustrated by Santos' tactics as by his punches. Santos never chose to engage Campas and fought the entire fight running circles

Diaz gets his jaw rattled by a Margarito uppercut

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Slick Santos pounded a surrender out of aging Campas

around the ring at Bally's Event Center. Santos jabbed frequently and would mix something else in when he had to. Otherwise, it was an easy, if not mundane, victory for Santos, 154, Puerto Rico.

Judge Glenn Trowbridge (USA) had it 99-91 for Santos. Adelaide Triplett (USA) had it 99-90, and Chuck Giampa (USA) had it 97-93. THE RING saw it 98-92.

"I think I proved tonight I'm ready for anybody," Santos, 26, said. "I want to get in the fights where I can make some money. I'll fight any of them: [Oscar] De La Hoya, [Fernando] Vargas, [Felix] Trinidad, Winky [Wright]. I think I deserve a fight where I can make some money."

The 30-year-old Campas' only moment of glory came in the eighth, when he managed to trap Santos in a corner. He landed a big right that sent an obviously dazed Santos skidding along the ropes. Campas, though, didn't have the explosiveness to get in there and take advantage of the opening.

"He hits very hard," Santos said. "No doubt about it, he hurt me a few times, but I was able to recover quickly."

Santos came back strong in the ninth and opened the cut over Campas' eye that would ultimately cause the Mexican to say "no mas." Santos systematically did what he had to do until Campas cried uncle. That gave Santos, 25-2-1 (20) with 1 no-contest, the win and put him in very select company. The only other men to have beaten Campas, 79-5 (67), were Trinidad, Vargas, Jose Luis Lopez, and Oba Carr.

Television: Showtime
Promoter: Top Rank
(3-16-02)
Kevin Iole

Sven Ottke W 12 Rick Thornberry

Magdeburg, Germany: Frequently dismissed as a light-punch-ing beneficiary of the dearth of quality chal-lengers at super middleweight, Ottke, 16[illegible] Germany, is putting together a strong case fo[illegible] reassessment of his worth. This was his div-sion-record 13th defense of the IBF title, an[illegible] once more he was almost flawless. Thornberry, 167, Australia, was not expecte[illegible] to trouble the German, but he did not eve[illegible] win a round in their bout at Boerdelandhalle[illegible] and Ottke should be accorded his due.

A bout with Joe Calzaghe, Ottke's onl[illegible] serious rival for recognition as the world's best 168-pounder, is the fight we would al[illegible] like to see, but it does not appear it wil[illegible] happen.

"I've tried to make things happen on thi[illegible] front, but so far to no avail," said Calzaghe's promoter, Frank Warren. The Welshman declared: "I'd love to fight him, but I don't know how badly he wants to fight me."

The 34-year-old German had his sights fixed instead on June 1 and a rematch with mandatory challenger Thomas Tate. Ottke, 26-0 (5), claimed a controversial 11th-round technical decision in 1999 over the American in Magdeburg after the fight was stopped due to a cut suffered by Ottke that was ruled, perhaps incorrectly, to be from an unintentional headbutt. There was no such controversy concerning his one-sided affair with Thornberry, also 34, who had previously given Calzaghe trouble at a time when the Welshman was experiencing chronic injury problems. Ottke found him no trouble at all.

Repeatedly, he pierced the Australian's defense with punishing combinations and maintained authority with his strong, accurate jab. Each round followed the same pattern, with the German title-holder administering a boxing lesson. From the midway point, Thornberry, 25-4 (12), required a knockout to win, but landing a clean punch even proved beyond him.

All three judges, Arno Pokrandt (Germany), Luca Montello (Italy), and John Wright (Australia) scored the bout 120-108 for Ottke, as did THE RING.

The only controversy came afterward. Wilfred Sauerland, Ottke's promoter, and Klaus-Petr Kohl's Universum-Box Promotions seem destined for a power struggle over Ottke's future, with Universum reportedly offering a $5-million, four-fight deal to lure him from Sauerland, with whom Ottke signed a four-year deal in 1997 after his Olympic triumph. Sauerland, however, has an option of two further years and insisted Ottke is under contract until March 2003.

Promoter: Wilfred Sauerland
(3-16-02)
Brian Doogan

Felix Machado Tech. Win 6 Martin Castillo

Reading, Pennsylvania: Sometimes the eyes can be deceiving in boxing. The judges can see one fighter dominating the action, while the ringside media can see a completely different fight. The

eyes can also deceive when it comes to cuts, some of which may appear much worse than they actually are. Both forms of questionable vision came into play and hurt former Mexican Olympian Castillo when he tried to pry the IBF junior bantamweight title from Machado in front of 3,920 fans at the Sovereign Center.

To almost everyone but the judges, Castillo, 21-1 (13), seemed to be beating Machado, 22-3-1 (11), when referee Blair Talmadge (USA) stopped the fight after six rounds due to an accidental headbutt, on the advice of ringside physician Dr. Alan Brackup. Both men were covered in blood due to a series of head clashes. Machado was bleeding from a cut over his right eye, while Castillo had a laceration on his scalp, which spewed a steady flow of crimson down the right side of his head. It was Castillo's cut that prompted the controversial stoppage, despite the fact that the blood wasn't flowing into the eye and didn't seem to pose any danger for the challenger.

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Castillo battles through the blood, which, you'll notice, isn't getting in his eye

Still, they went to the scorecards, and after six rounds, judges George Hill (USA), Ron Greenley (USA), and Pierre Benoist (USA) all scored it 58-56 for Machado, who was making his third defense. Most at ringside had the same score—but they had it in favor of Castillo. THE RING saw it even wider, at 59-55 for Castillo.

Castillo, 114½, started fast, attacking Machado, 115, Venezuela, to the body in the first round. Machado, 29, picked up his work rate in the second, keeping Castillo, 25, away with the jab. But by the fourth and fifth rounds, Castillo had figured out how to get inside Machado's jab, and was punishing his taller attacker to the body again.

Midway through the fifth, the fighters leaned into each other, banging heads. The collision left both men bleeding. Castillo's cut appeared much worse on a superficial level, as blood poured down behind his right ear, yet not into his eyes.

Brackup, however, did not want to take the risk of causing further damage to Castillo, calling a halt. The decision enraged the Castillo corner, which felt denied the chance to let highly respected cutman Miguel Diaz work on the cut.

"The cut wasn't that serious," maintained Castillo's trainer, Manuel Robles Jr. "The fight should have continued. They should have given Miguel more of an opportunity to work on the cut. He's one of the best cutmen there is and he didn't have a chance to work."

As of press time, the IBF was strongly considering ordering a rematch.

Television: Showtime

Promoter: Don King Productions

(3-30-02)

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Masamori Tokuyama KO 9 Kazuhiro Ryuko

Yokohama, Japan: Sharp-punching Tokuyama, 115, impressively retained the WBC super fly belt as he swept every round before sinking Japanese southpaw Ryuko, 115, with a smashing right, prompting a stoppage at 2:42 of the ninth session at the Yokohama Arena.

All the official tallies after the eighth were identical: Carol Castellano (USA), Gale Van Hoy (USA), and Ken Morita (Japan), all scored it 80-72, giving each round to the defending champ.

It was the fourth defense for Tokuyama, a North Korean who resides in Japan. Since dethroning previously unbeaten In Joo Cho by an upset decision in Osaka, Japan, in August 2000, Tokuyama has shown remarkable progress in every defense, beating hard-hitting Akihiko Nago (W 12), stretching ex-titlist Cho with a single right in Korea (KO 5), and outscoring formidable former titleholder Gerry Penalosa (W 12).

The Ryuko defense was much more lopsided than expected, as Tokuyama, 27, kept throwing straight rights to the face and broke the 29-year-old challenger's nose in the second. Ryuko, a former amateur standout, tried to avert Tokuyama's lead rights, but as the contest progressed, the Korean caught the stylish southpaw with more and more precision.

Tokuyama had the cautious Ryuko in trouble in the fourth and sixth sessions, catching him with repeated right hands. It became clear that it was only a matter of time until Tokuyama would accelerate his attack and terminate the affair.

In the ninth, it was Ryuko who turned loose and desperately attempted a go-for-broke attack, but Tokuyama exploded with a well-timed counter right hand, sending him sprawling to the deck. Ryuko got up, but after Japanese referee Kazumasa Kuwata tolled the mandatory eight, he determined that the badly damaged challenger looked unfit to go on, and declared a well-received stoppage.

It was a great disappointment that Ryuko, 13-2-3 (4), was unable to win even a round, but it serves as an indication of Tokuyama's rapid improvement in power and skills, especially in coping with a southpaw opponent. Nago and Penalosa are both lefties as well, and Tokuyama, 26-2-1 (7), seems to have mastered how to handle them.

Following his graduation from Kinki University, Ryuko had decided to quit boxing after his 110-contest amateur career to become a professional singer. While receiving vocal lessons, he went to Watanabe gym to kill time and shape himself up for a future on the stage, but he ended up turning professional as a fighter. He will most likely hang up the gloves for good now to pursue his original plan of performing on the stage.

Promoter: Watanabe Promotions

(3-23-02)

Joe Koizumi

Wladimir Klitschko KO 8 Frans Botha

Stuttgart, Germany: As the heavyweight division gets ready to enter a new post-Lewis, post-Tyson, post-Holyfield era, there is considerable support for Klitschko, Hamburg, Germany, via Kiev, Ukraine, in his bid to take hold of the torch. Against South African veteran Botha, he dominated from the outset before finally forcing the former victim of Lewis and Tyson to the canvas in the eighth at Hanns-Martin Schleyer Halle to retain the WBO heavyweight belt—and his generally agreed-upon number-one rating below Lewis.

Botha leans into a Klitschko hook

Botha, 241, was brave as usual, but he was completely outgunned by his 6'7", 242-pound adversary who, when he accentuates and fully exploits his physical advantages, is a formidable force.

"Wladimir is a great fighter and I wish him all the best on his way to the top," Botha said. "With what he brings to the ring, he can definitely get there."

He certainly had no trouble in getting to Botha. "The White Buffalo" threw a haymaker right in the opening round that Klitschko comfortably avoided before dealing easily with a further Botha attack to the body. The 33-year-old campaigner knew he had to try and force himself in close to Klitschko, 25, to stand any chance, but a left hook in the second that connected with his jaw emphasized the danger confronting him. Still, he propelled himself forward, as Klitschko had yet to establish authority with his powerful jab.

In the third, Klitschko found his rhythm with the straight left, which frequently pierced Botha's guard. Botha clinched to avoid sustained punishment from Klitschko's impressive arsenal, but could not avoid everything. By the fifth, his eyes were closing, his face was swelling, and he was being hit more frequently with harder shots. A right hand in the sixth staggered him, and another right in the seventh followed by a left hook and a hurtful combination had Botha trying desperately to survive at the bell.

The minute's respite was all too brief. Botha began the eighth with a haymaker that missed, and Klitschko made him pay with a solid right that sent him stumbling around the ring. A left hook floored Botha, and referee Genaro Rodriguez (USA) issued the eight-count before waving him on to continue. But Botha, 44-4-1 (28), made it clear that he'd had enough, and Rodriguez quickly waved it off 48 seconds into the round.

"I had been out of the ring for a while and that made it tougher for me, but he's a tough guy," said Klitschko, 38-1 (35). "I'm definitely hoping this is a big year for me."

Promoter: Universum Box

(3-16-02)

Brian Doogan

New Face

(Continued from page 16)

and he has good instincts. He will readjust during a fight, until the conditions fit him and he can get his shots off. His left hook is very impressive; he has good leverage on it. I'd like to see him get more experience, and improve his footwork. He has good speed with each hand, but we don't like him standing in one place for too long. In some ways, he's a slow starter, but his pace is very good. As the rounds go, he gets better.

"I see him most definitely being a world champion one day. He has everything good behind him. He's one of those likable kids who has charisma, and someone you could easily sell."

Diaz figures he wouldn't be in this position—maybe not even in boxing—if he and his family had remained in Las Vegas, where he lived from age three until he was 10, before moving back to a tough area of San Antonio.

There were gang wars and certain danger zones Diaz had to be aware of. Diaz said he went from a safe haven in Las Vegas, which was predominantly middle class, to a place where he had to watch what streets he crossed. Some areas of San Antonio were so bad, Diaz recalled, you had to be wary of how you looked at someone.

Once when he was 16, Diaz got into a fight at a gas station. Diaz was at a pump and looked up at this guy across from him, a boy who was a few years older than he was. He asked Diaz, "Do I owe you something?" When Diaz didn't respond, the older kid got furious and kicked Diaz' car. Before he knew it, Diaz was embroiled in a fistfight.

"That wasn't me. I wasn't the type who looked for trouble," said Diaz, who signed with Duva Boxing at 18 right after graduating high school. "Sometimes, I didn't know when to walk away. I suppose I can consider myself fortunate. I had friends who were shot over stupid stuff. I have a cousin who was stabbed, doing things he shouldn't have been doing, in a place he shouldn't have been in anyway. I was boxing. I was trying to get away by just keeping with boxing."

It was Diaz' slight veer from boxing when he was 13 that led him afoul of the law for the first and only time in his life. Diaz and a friend were roaming through a department store, when Diaz thought he'd try smuggling out a T-shirt. At the time, Diaz, who began boxing when he was 10, along with his younger brother, Fernando, was taking a brief sabbatical from the sport.

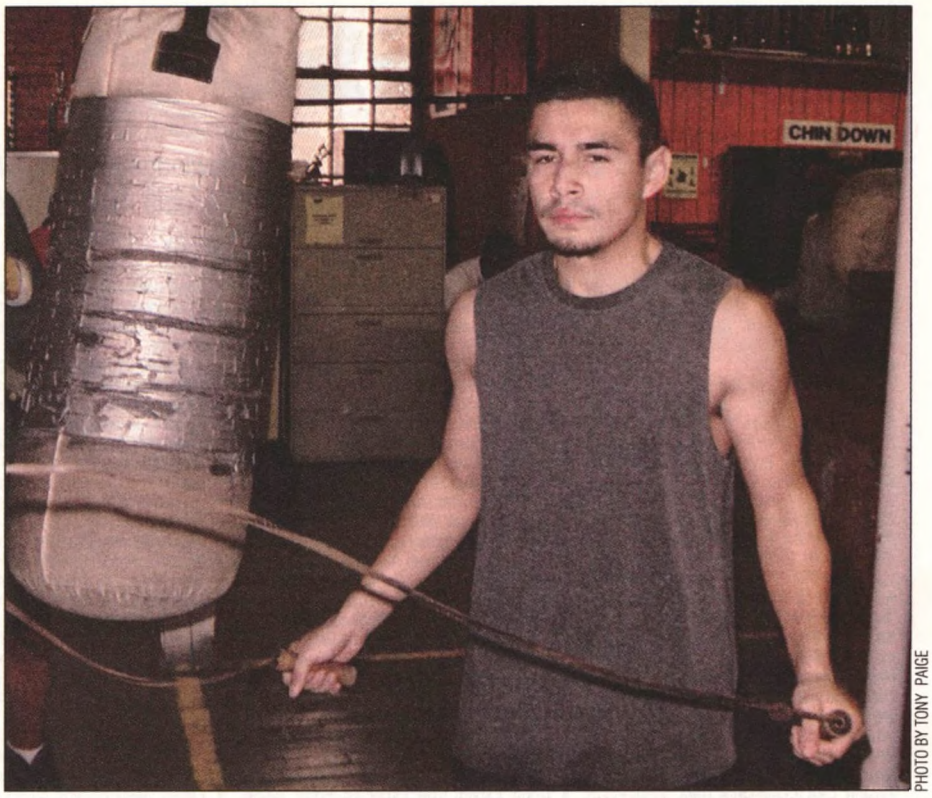

PHOTO BY TONY PAIGE

Diaz works hard on conditioning ... and improving his Spanish

"I was 13 and I got away from boxing. I just told my father I didn't want to box anymore," Diaz remembered. "I took off for two months, and my dad got mad at me. That's around the same time I got caught stealing a shirt. That's a thing my father didn't want me to do. He didn't want me to get into anything bad. I had to get myself back into boxing, and I stayed with it. It's something that I wanted to do, under my terms, not something I felt I had to do, like a job.

"If we had stayed in Las Vegas, I don't think I'd be boxing now. Where we lived and how everything was going then, I'd probably be in college. I want to go to college now. But in San Antonio, we had nothing. I have a direction in my life. My father keeps telling me to remember where I came from, and he doesn't want money to change me. Money is power, but my father is still a presence in my life. I'm still going to question certain things and find out things for myself. My dad can't control me, because I'm exactly how he is. When we talk, we yell at each other a lot of times. I like that, though, because that still tells me he cares about me."

One area Diaz is working hard to improve is his Spanish. Though he's of Mexican heritage, Diaz doesn't speak Spanish. He can understand it and read it, but feels uncomfortable speaking it. It's very important to Diaz to regain some mastery of the language his parents and sister speak.

"I'm practicing my Spanish," Diaz said. "I regret not learning it. It's me, it's a part of me; it's who I am. I am a Latin fighter, and proud of it, even though I don't speak Spanish very well. That is something different, that's why I will be speaking Spanish very soon. I'm getting my mom and dad to speak to me more in Spanish. My roots are important to me. I want people to know who I am, and I don't want to change. I don't have any kids, but when I do, I want my kids to know English as well as Spanish."

Diaz also realizes that Mexican and Mexican-American fans tend to get behind the Latino fighters who are in touch with their roots and who speak the tongue of their ancestors.

"I need the public on my side," he said. "They make me. It's not me making them. Without them, without my fans, I'm nobody." ■

BACK ISSUES OF KO

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Oct. 1983: Is Larry Holmes Finished? Color Pinup: Greg Page. Interview: Marvis Frazier. Also: Marvin Hagler, Bobby Chacon, Jack Dempsey.

Aug. 1984: WBC Heavyweight Champion Terrible Tim Witherspoon: A Superstar Of Tomorrow? Color Pinup: Rocky Lockridge. Interview: Sugar Ray Leonard. Also: Marvin Hagler, Gomez-LaPorte.

Oct. 1984: Golden Boy Mark Breland: Can He Be The Next Sugar Ray? Color Pinup: Jaime Garza. Interview: Aaron Pryor. Also: Bramble-Mancini, Sugar Ray Leonard.

Nov. 1984: Thomas Hearns: "Hagler Is Shakin' Like A Leaf On A Tree!" Color Pinup: Tim Witherspoon. Interview: Livingstone Bramble. Also: Rosario-Davis, Marlon Starling.

Jan. 1985: The Wide-Open Heavyweight Division: Who Will Take Control? Color Pinup: Bill Costello. Interview: Tyrone Crawley. Also: Harry Arroyo, Curry-Pryor, Barry McGuigan.

Feb. 1985: Gerry Cooney: How Far Can He Go This Time? Color Pinup: Michael Spinks. Interview: Ray Mancini. Also: Dream fights, Hector Camacho.

March 1985: Next For Marvelous Marvin Hagler: The Only Fight That Really Matters. Color pinup: Mike McCallum. Interview: Thomas Hearns. Also: Santos-Medal, Meza-Garza, Holmes-Bonecrusher.

May 1985: Thomas Hearns: KO Fighter Of The Year. Color Pinup: Gerry Cooney. Also: Camacho-Ramirez, Truth Williams, Year In Review.

July 1985: Aaron Pryor: Has Hawk Time Run Out? Color Pinup: Donald Curry. Interview: Greg Page. Also: Ray Mancini, James Shuler, Costello-Hatcher.

Aug. 1985: King Cobra: "Hagler-Hearns Is Done And I'm Better Than Both Of Them!" Color Pinup: John Mugabi. Interview: Bobby Czyz. Also: Larry Holmes, Roberto Duran, DeWitt-Lee.

Dec. 1985: Pinklon Thomas: "Larry Holmes Betrayed Boxing." Color Pinup: Hagler-Mugabi. Also: Mike McCallum, Tyrell Biggs, Camacho-Ramirez.

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July 1986: Tyson, McGuigan, Hagler: The Stars Catch Fire And Boxing Is Hot Again! Color Pinup: Azumah Nelson. Also: Camacho-Chavez.

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Dec. 1987: Mike Tyson: Undisputed Heavyweight King-But Is He Losing His Loyal Subjects? Color Pinup: Matthew Hilton. Interview: Barry McGuigan. Also: Aaron Pryor, Mike McCallum.

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Feb. 1988: Pazienza & Haugen Go For Each Other's Throats. Color Pinup: Marlon Starling. Interview: Bob Arum. Also: Tate-Olajide, ESPN Boxing.

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Feb. 1989: George Foreman Is Born Again. Color Pinup: Meldrick Taylor. Interview: Bill Cayton. Also: The Olympics, Davey Hilton, John Mugabi, Barry McGuigan.

Sept. 1989: "I Beat Up Tyson Before, I'll Do It Again," by Carl Williams. Color Pinup: Michael Nunn. Also: Chavez-Mayweather, Brian Mitchell, Marv Albert.

Nov. 1989: The Real Duran; The Stories Behind The Legend. Color Pinup: Orlando Canizales. Interview: Mike Trainer. Also: Edwin Rosario, Rosi-Van Horn.

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June 1991: Exclusive KO Interview: Evander Holyfield. Color Pinup: Raul Perez. Also: Norris-Leonard, Charles Williams, champs of 1971 vs. 1991, Chavez.

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Dec. 1991: Tyson vs. Holyfield-The Experts Analyze The Elements That Will Decide The Fight. Color Pinup: Joey Gamache. Also: Michael Moorer, Pernell Whitaker, Greg Richardson, Robert Quiroga.

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Jan. 1993: Holyfield vs. Bowe: Who Will Win and Why. Color Pinup: Al Cole. Interview: Vinny Pazienza. Also: James Toney, Terrence Alli, Maurice Blocker.

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KO **100.** Color Pinup: Terry Norris. Interview: Bob Arum. Plus: Roy Jones, Roberto Duran, Joe Cortez.

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Why The Fight Of The Year Isn't Going To Happen. Color Pinup: Evander Holyfield. Interview: Eddie Futch. Plus: Hector Lizarraga, pain, Head-To-Head review.

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Sept. 2000: Now Vargas Is Ready For Trinidad & De La Hoya. Color Pinup: Erik Morales. Interview: Chris Byrd. Plus: Trinidad vs. all-time greats, Thomas Hearns, common sense vs. cowardice.

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Dec. 2001: Laila Ali: The Fighter, The Sex Symbol ... The Future Of Women's Boxing? Interview: Laila Ali. Plus: Oscar De La Hoya, Tim Austin, Manny Pacquiao, Hector Camacho Jr.

Feb. 2002: Bernard Hopkins: "I Am The American Dream. I Am The American Story" Interview: Wladimir Klitschko. Plus: Omar Sheika, Vernon Forrest, Juan Lazcano.

April 2002: After Hitting Rock Bottom ... Lennox Is Back On The Path To Greatness. Interview: Duva Boxing. Plus: Zab Judah, Mike Tyson, Thomas Tate.

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ALPHABET RATINGS

The Rankings of Boxing's Three International Governing Bodies

WBA RATINGS
(Ratings as of March 2002)

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Champ: John Ruiz (USA)
1. Kirk Johnson (CAN)
2. Evander Holyfield (USA)
3. Vitaly Klitschko (UKR)
4. Mike Tyson (USA)
5. Fres Oquendo (PR)
6. Nicolay Valouev (RUS)
7. Oliver McCall (USA)
8. Jameel McCline (USA)
9. Larry Donald (USA)
10. Hasim Rahman (USA)
11. Danny Williams (GB)
12. Lamon Brewster (USA)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Champ: Jean Marc Mormeck (FRA)
1. Alexander Gurov (UKR)
2. James Toney (USA)
3. Wayne Braithwaite (GUY)
4. Virgil Hill (USA)
5. Fabrice Tiozzo (FRA)
6. O'Neil Bell (USA)
7. Ezra Sellers (USA)
8. Vincenzo Cantatore (ITA)
9. Luis Pineda (PAN)
10. Dale Brown (CAN)
11. Valery Brudov (RUS)
12. Louis Azille (DR)

LT. HEAVYWEIGHTS
Super Champ: Roy Jones (USA)
Champ: Bruno Girard (FRA)
1. Lou Del Valle (USA)
2. Antonio Tarver (USA)
3. Clinton Woods (GB)
4. Thomas Hansvoll (NOR)
5. David Telesco (USA)
6. Mads Larsen (DEN)
7. Reggie Johnson (USA)
8. Glencoffe Johnson (USA)
9. Glenn Kelly (AUSTRL)
10. Robert Koon (USA)
11. Julio Gonzalez (USA)
12. Montell Griffin (USA)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Champ: Byron Mitchell (USA)
1. Mehdi Sahnoune (FRA)
2. Thomas Tate (USA)
3. David Starie (GB)
4. Antwun Echols (USA)
5. Andrei Shkalikov (RUS)
6. Dana Rosenblatt (USA)
7. Julio Cesar Green (DR)
8. Manuel Siaca (PR)
9. Omar Sheika (USA)
10. Mikkel Kessler (DEN)
11. Danilo Haussler (GER)
12. Markus Beyer (GER)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Super Champ: Bernard Hopkins (USA)
Champ: William Joppy (USA)
1. Felix Trinidad (PR)
2. Howard Eastman (GB)
3. Keith Holmes (USA)
4. Hassine Cherifi (FRA)
5. Darren Obah (AUSTRL)
6. Cristian Sanavia (ITA)
7. Tito Mendoza (PAN)
8. Bert Schenk (GER)
9. Antonio Perugino (ITA)
10. Maselino Masoe (AUSTRL)
11. David Reid (USA)
12. Erland Betare (FRA)

SUPER WELTERWEIGHTS
Champ: Fernando Vargas (USA)
1. Vacant
2. Mamadou Thiam (FRA)
3. Roman Karmazin (RUS)
4. Santiago Samaniego (PAN)
5. Rhoshii Wells (USA)
6. Angel Hernandez (USA)
7. Travis Simms (USA)
8. Michael Rask (DEN)
9. Jose Flores (MEX)
10. Frank Olsen (DEN)
11. Akira Ohigashi (JAP)
12. Bronco McKart (USA)

WELTERWEIGHTS
Champ: Ricardo Mayorga (CR)
1. Vacant
2. Thomas Damgaard (DEN)
3. Michael Trabant (GERE)
4. Michele Piccirillo (ITA)
5. Andrew Lewis (GUY)
6. Jose Rivera (USA)
7. Golden Johnson (USA)
8. Carlos Baldomir (ARG)
9. Vincent Phillips (USA)
10. Hiroyuki Maeda (JAP)
11. Danny Perez (USA)
12. Frederic Klose (FRA)

SUPER LIGHTWEIGHTS
Super Champ: Kostya Tszyu (AUSTRL)
1. Randall Bailey (USA)
2. Diobelys Hurtado (CUB)
3. Sharmba Mitchell (USA)
4. Khalid Rahilou (FRA)
5. Ricky Hatton (GB)
6. Oktay Urkal (TUR)
7. Gianluca Branco (ITA)
8. Arturo Gatti (CAN)
9. Soulemane M'Baye (FRA)
10. Omar Weis (ARG)
11. Ben Tackie (USA)
12. Henry Bruseles (PR)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Champ: Leonard Dorin (CAN)
1. Raul Balbi (ARG)
2. Miguel Callist (PAN)
3. Stefano Zoff (ITA)
4. Julien Lorcy (FRA)
5. Juan Lazcano (USA)
6. Edson Xuxa Nascimento (BRA)
7. Juan Gomez-Trinidad (PR)
8. Angel Manfredy (USA)
9. Julio Diaz (USA)
10. Alex Trujillo (PR)
11. Steve Johnston (USA)
12. Prawet Singwangcha (THAI)

SUPER FEATHERWEIGHTS
Super Champ: Acelino Freitas (BRA)
1. Lakva Sim (MON)
2. Yodsanan Nanthachai (THAI)
3. Joel Casanayor (CUB)
4. Jorge Barrios (ARG)
5. Phillip Ndou (SA)
6. Tontcho Tontchev (BUL)
7. Jose Miguel Cotto (PR)
8. Michael Gomez (GB)
9. Silvano Usini (ITA)
10. Carlos Hernandez (SAL)
11. Jesus Chavez (MEX)
12. Daniel Attah (NIG)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Champ: Derrick Gainer (USA)
1. Daniel Seda (PR)
2. Juan Manuel Marquez (MEX)
3. Marco Antonio Barrera (MEX)
4. Naseem Hamed (GB)
5. Johnny Tapia (USA)
6. Lewis Woods (US)
7. Victor Polo (COL)
8. Injin Chi (KOR)
9. Takashi Koshimoto (JAP)
10. Kengo Nagashima (JAP)
11. Cyril Thomas (FRA)
12. Chris John (IND)

SUPER BANTAMWEIGHTS
Champ: Yoddamrong Sithyodthong (THAI)
1. Vacant
2. Salim Medjkoune (FRA)
3. Israel Vasquez (MEX)
4. Yober Ortega (VEN)
5. Paulie Ayala (USA)
6. Kozo Ishii (JAP)
7. Osamu Sato (JAP)
8. Johnny Armour (GB)
9. Somsak Sithchachawan (THAI)
10. Michael Brodie (GB)
11. Enrique Sanchez (MEX)
12. Nadel Hussein (AUSTRL)

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Champ: Eidy Moya (VEN)
1. Vacant
2. Leo Gamez (VEN)
3. Johnny Bredahl (DEN)
4. Toshiaki Nishioka (JAP)
5. Rafael Marquez (MEX)
6. Diego Morales (MEX)
7. Spend Abazi (DEN)
8. Adan Vargas (MEX)
9. Ratanachai Vorapin (THAI)
10. Genaro Garcia (USA)
11. Noriaki Naka (JAP)
12. Pete Frissina (USA)

SUPER FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Alexander Munoz (VEN)
1. Vacant
2. Saen Sow Ploenchit (THAI)
3. Mbwana Matumla (TNZ)
4. Sornpichai Pisnurachank (THAI)
5. Celes Kobayashi (JAP)
6. Hideki Todaka (JAP)
7. Katsushigo Kawashima (JAP)
8. Jesus Rojas (VEN)
9. Gerry Penalosa (PHIL)
10. Luis Bolanos (COL)
11. Kazuhiro Ryuko (JAP)
12. Takuya Kiya (JAP)

FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Eric Morel (USA)
1. Denkaosaen Kaowitch (THAI)
2. Mzukisi Sikali (SA)
3. Isidro Garcia (MEX)
4. Alejandro Montiel (MEX)
5. Alexander Mahmutov (RUS)
6. Hiroshi Nakano (JAP)
7. Damaen Kelly (GB)
8. Lorenzo Parra (VEN)
9. Masaki Nakamuna (JAP)
10. Jose Carita Lopez (PR)
11. Hussein Hussein (AUSTRL)
12. Jair Jimenez (COL)

LIGHT FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Rosendo Alvarez (NIC)
1. Vacant
2. Hidenobu Honda (JAP)
3. Yura Dima (MON)
4. Bebis Mendoza (COL)
5. Melchor Cob Castro (MEX)
6. Deeden Kengkarun (THAI)
7. Pichit C. Siriwat (THAI)
8. Masibulele Makepula (SA)
9. Saman Sorjaturong (THAI)
10. Edgar Velasquez (VEN)
11. Eric Ortiz (MEX)
12. Noel Tunacao (PHIL)

MINIMUMWEIGHTS
Champ: Keitaro Hoshino (JAP)
1. Noel Arambulet (VEN)
2. Chana Porpaoin (THAI)
3. Hiroshi Nakajima (JAP)
4. Joma Gamboa (PHIL)
5. Kim Ki Hwan (KOR)
6. Daniel Reyes (COL)
7. Jose Garcia (COL)
8. Khulile Makeba (SA)
9. Hiroshi Matsumoto (JAP)
10. Alex Sanchez (PR)
11. Songkram Porpaoin (THAI)
12. Juan Landaeta (VEN)

WBC RATINGS
(Ratings as of April 2002)

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Champ: Lennox Lewis (GB)
1. Mike Tyson (USA)
2. Vitali Klitschko (UKR)
3. Hasim Rahman (USA)
4. Fres Oquendo (USA)
5. Evander Holyfield (USA)
6. Oliver McCall (USA)
7. Juan Carlos Gomez (CUB)
8. Chris Byrd (USA)
9. Jameel McCline (USA)
10. Danny Williams (GB)
11. Clifford Etienne (USA)
12. Ray Mercer (USA)
13. Kirk Johnson (CAN)
14. Michael Moorer (USA)
15. Lamon Brewster (USA)
16. Tim Witherspoon (USA)
17. Lance Whitaker (USA)
18. Sergei Lyakhovich (RUS)
19. Larry Donald (USA)
20. Vaughn Bean (USA)
21. David Tua (NZ)
22. Monte Barrett (USA)
23. Brian Nielsen (DEN)
24. Luan Krasniqi (GER)
25. Henry Akinwande (GB)
26. Faruq Saleem (USA)
27. Shannon Briggs (USA)
28. Nicolay Valouev (RUS)
29. Joe Mesi (USA)
30. Peter Okhello (UGA)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Champ: Vacant
1. Wayne Braithwaite (GUY)
2. Vincenzo Cantatore (ITA)
3. O'Neil Bell (USA)
4. Alexander Gurov (UKR)
5. Carlos Cruzat (CHI)
6. Louis Azille (DR)
7. Dale Brown (CAN)
8. Sebastiaan Rothmann (SA)
9. Michael Nunn (USA)
10. James Toney (USA)
11. Bruce Scott (GB)
12. Virgil Hill (USA)
13. Turan Bagci (TUR)
14. Ramon Garbey (USA)
15. Jason Robinson (USA)
16. Ezra Sellers (USA)
17. Carl Thompson (GB)
18. Fabrice Tiozzo (FRA)
19. Rudiger May (GER)
20. Kelvin Davis (USA)
21. Adolpho Washington (USA)
22. Luis Andres Pineda (PAN)
23. Alain Simon (FRA)
24. Pietro Aurino (ITA)
25. Arthur Williams (USA)
26. Roman Kovalchuk (UKR)
27. Mohamed Ben Guesmia (ALG)
28. Kenny Keene (USA)
29. Frederic Serrat (FRA)
30. Daniel Rowsell (AUSTRL)

LT. HEAVYWEIGHTS
Champ: Roy Jones (USA)
1. Clinton Woods (GB)
2. Yawe Davis (ITA)
3. Antonio Tarver (USA)
4. Mads Larsen (DEN)
5. Eric Harding (USA)
6. Julio Gonzalez (USA)
7. Reggie Johnson (USA)
8. Lou Del Valle (USA)
9. Jorge Castro (ARG)
10. Montell Griffin (USA)
11. Derrick Harmon (USA)
12. Glenn Kelly (AUSTRL)
13. Thomas Hansvoll (NOR)
14. Syd Vanderpool (CAN)
15. David Telesco (USA)
16. Glencoffe Johnson (USA)
17. Thomas Ulrich (GER)
18. Paul Briggs (AUSTRL)
19. Kamel Amrane (FRA)
20. Mario Tonus (ITA)
21. Sergio Baez (ARG)
22. Silvio Branco (ITA)
23. Juan Nelongo (SPA)
24. Demetrius Jenkins (USA)
25. Stipe Drews (CRO)
26. Tomasz Adamek (POL)
27. Arturo Rivera (MEX)
28. Michael Rush (USA)
29. Danny Santiago (PR)
30. Rodney Moore (USA)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Champ: Eric Lucas (CAN)
1. Markus Beyer (GER)
2. David Starie (GB)
3. Thomas Tate (USA)
4. Danilo Haussler (GER)
5. Mikkel Kessler (DEN)
6. Zafarou Ballogou (TOGO)
7. Antwun Echols (USA)
8. Glenn Catley (GB)
9. Dingaan Thobela (SA)
10. Omar Sheika (USA)
11. Jurgen Brahmer (GER)
12. Charles Brewer (USA)
13. Mehdi Sanoune (FRA)
14. Yoshinori Nishizawa (JAP)
15. Henry Porras (CR)
16. Dan Batchelder (USA)
17. Robin Reid (GB)
18. Brian Magee (GB)
19. Mario Veit (GER)
20. David Reid (USA)
21. Anthony Hanshaw (USA)
22. Nordin Ben Salah (HOL)
23. James Lubwana (UGA)
24. Vinny Pazienza (USA)
25. Omar Gonzalez (ARG)
26. Andrei Shkalikov (RUS)
27. Rudy Markussen (DEN)
28. Jeff Lacy (USA)
29. Jean Paul Mendy (FRA)
30. Miguel Angel Jimenez (PR)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Champ: Bernard Hopkins (USA)
1. Erland Betare (FRA)
2. Felix Trinidad (PR)
3. Cristian Sanavia (ITA)
4. Tito Mendoza (PAN)
5. Jerry Elliott (NIG)
6. Naotaka Hozumi (JAP)
7. Antonio Perugino (ITA)
8. Raymond Joval (HOL)
9. Morrade Hakkar (FRA)
10. Robert Allen (USA)
11. Keith Holmes (USA)
12. Travis Simms (USA)
13. Carl Daniels (USA)
14. Kuvanych Toygonbayev (UZB)
15. Raul Marquez (USA)
16. Alejandro Berrio (COL)
17. Oure Evans (KEN)
18. Jorge Sendra (SPA)
19. Tokunbo Olajide (CAN)
20. Kevin Palmer (USA)
21. Andras Galfi (HUN)
22. Lansana Djallo (BEL)
23. Cristian Zanabria (ARG)
24. Hector Velazco (ARG)
25. Anthony Farnell (GB)
26. Delroy Leslie (GB)
27. Stephan Trabant (GER)
28. Satoru Suzuki (JAP)
29. Lee Blundell (GB)
30. Jermain Taylor (USA)

SUPER WELTERWEIGHTS
Champ: Oscar De La Hoya (USA)
1. Roman Karmazin (RUS)
2. Francisco Castillejo (SPA)
3. Fitz Vanderpool (CAN)
4. Bronco McKart (USA)
5. Nader Hamdan (AUSTRL)
6. Akira Ohigashi (JAP)
7. Mamadou Thiam (FRA)
8. Wayne Alexander (GB)
9. Steve Roberts (GB)
10. Angel Hernandez (ME)
11. Kofi Jantuah (GHA)
12. Kirino Garcia (MEX)
13. Richard Williams (GB)
14. Kassim Ouma (USA)
15. Rhoshii Wells (USA)
16. Alex Bunema (USA)
17. J.C. Candelo (COL)
18. Michael Rask (DEN)
19. Christophe Canchan (FR)
20. Santiago Samaniego (PA)
21. Sergei Dzindzirak (UKR)
22. Adrian Stone (GB)
23. Wilfredo Rivera (PR)
24. Mihaly Kotai (HUN)
25. Gary Lockett (GB)
26. Joshua Onyango (KEN)
27. Emmett Linton (USA)
28. Joachin Alcine (CAN)
29. Gary Jones (USA)
30. Emil Baku (AZR)

WELTERWEIGHTS
Champ: Vernon Forrest (US
1. Shane Mosley (USA)
2. Jose Luis Cruz (MEX)
3. Carlos Baldomir (ARG)
4. Thomas Damgaard (DEN)
5. Danny Perez (USA)
6. Hercules Kyvelos (CAN)
7. Michele Piccirillo (ITA)
8. Julian Holland (AUSTRL)
9. Christian Bladt (DEN)
10. Cory Spinks (USA)
11. Andrew Lewis (GUY)
12. Manuel Gomez (MEX)
13. Rafael Pineda (COL)
14. Rev Santillan (PHIL)
15. Jawaid Khaliq (GB)
16. Jeffrey Hill (USA)
17. Michele Orlando (ITA)
18. Alessandro Duran (ITA)
19. Alexander Vetoux (UKR)
20. Sergio Martinez (ARG)
21. Michel Trabant (GER)
22. Golden Johnson (USA)
23. Hassan Al (DEN)
24. Frederic Klose (FRA)
25. Juan Carlos Rubio (MEX)
26. Charles Whitaker (CAY)
27. Chantel Stanciel (USA)
28. Luther Smith (USA)
29. Miguel Rodriguez (USA)
30. Neil Sinclair (GB)

SUPER LIGHTWEIGHTS
Champ: Kostya Tszyu (AUSTRL)
1. Gianluca Branco (ITA)
2. Arturo Gatti (CAN)
3. Ricky Hatton (GB)
4. Eamonn Magee (GB)
5. Ben Tackie (GHA)
6. James Leija (USA)
7. Oktay Urkal (TUR)
8. Omar Weis (ARG)
9. Hector Camacho Jr. (PR)
10. Masakazu Satake (JAP)
11. Gabriel Mapuoka (FRA)
12. Sharmba Mitchell (USA)
13. Wilfredo Vilches (ARG)
14. Ener Julio (COL)
15. Miguel Cotto (PR)
16. Francisco Bojado (MEX)
17. Terronn Millett (USA)
18. Mikhail Krivolapov (RUS)
19. Hiroyuki Sakamoto (JAP)
20. Vince Phillips (USA)
21. Soulemane M'Baye (FRA)
22. Vivian Harris (USA)
23. Junior Witter (GB)
24. Diobelys Hurtado (CUB)
25. Khalid Rahilou (FRA)
26. Pablo Sarmiento (ARG)

27. Giuseppe Lauri (ITA)
28. Juan Mosquera (PAN)
29. Ivan Kirpa (RUS)
30. Fabrice Colombel (FRA)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Champ: Jose Luis Castillo (MEX)
1. Steve Johnston (USA)
2. Juan Lazcano (USA)
3. Stefano Zoff (ITA)
4. Alex Trujillo (PR)
5. Julio Diaz (USA)
6. Carlos Gerena (PR)
7. Raul Balbi (ARG)
8. Julien Lorcy (FRA)
9. Victoriano Damian Sosa (DR)
10. Colin Dunne (GB)
11. Sandro Casamonica (ITA)
12. Aldo Rios (ARG)
13. Bobby Vanzie (GB)
14. Dennis Laurente (PHIL)
15. Zimele Mpusula (SA)
16. Miguel Callist (PAN)
17. Julian Wheeler (USA)
18. Diego Gimenez (ARG)
19. Lawrence Ngobeni (SA)
20. Cesar Bazan (MEX)
21. Efren Hinojosa (MEX)
22. Omar Bernal (MEX)
23. Gary Balletto (USA)
24. Michael Clark (USA)
25. Michele Delli Paoli (ITA)
26. Steve Murray (GB)
27. Justo Sencion (USA)
28. Sayan Sanchat (RUS)
29. Tadashi Yuba (JAP)
30. Alipio Gil (MEX)

SUPER FEATHERWEIGHTS
Champ: Floyd Mayweather (USA)
1. Sirimongkol Singmanassuk (THAI)
2. Kengo Nagashima (JAP)
3. Jesus Chavez (USA)
4. Tiger Ari (PHIL)
5. Randy Suico (PHIL)
6. Alejandro Gonzalez (MEX)
7. Lakva Sim (MON)
8. Joel Casamayor (CUB)
9. Philip Ndou (SA)
10. Carlos Hernandez (EL SALV)
11. Jorge Barrios (ARG)
12. Affif Djelti (FRA)
13. Pedro Miranda (SPA)
14. Ernesto Zepeda (MEX)
15. Tontcho Tontchev (BUL)
16. Fernando Trejo (MEX)
17. Jorge Paez (MEX)
18. Michael Gomez (GB)
19. Boris Sinitsin (RUS)
20. Orlando Salido (MEX)
21. Claudio Martinet (ARG)
22. Mzoneke Fana (SA)
23. Javier Alvarez (ARG)
24. Alex Arthur (GB)
25. Silvano Usini (ITA)
26. Lamont Pearson (USA)
27. Javier Jauregui (MEX)
28. Yodsanan Nanthachai (THAI)
29. Hogu Min (KOR)
30. David Santos (USA)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Champ: Erik Morales (MEX)
1. Injin Chi (KOR)
2. Juan Manuel Marquez (MEX)
3. Michael Brodie (GB)
4. Takashi Koshimoto (JAP)
5. Manuel Calvo (SPA)
6. Robbie Peden (AUSTRL)
7. Naseem Hamed (GB)
8. Anthony Tshehla (SA)
9. Scott Harrison (GB)
10. Guty Espadas (MEX)
11. Luis Fuentes (MEX)
12. Istvan Kovacs (HUN)
13. Junior Jones (USA)
14. Panther Yanagida (JAP)
15. William Abelyan (USA)
16. Hector Acero-Sanchez (DR)
17. John Michael Johnson (USA)
18. Fernando Velardez (MEX)
19. Daniel Seda (PR)
20. Orlando Soto (PAN)
21. Frankie Toledo (USA)
22. Augie Sanchez (USA)
23. Pastor Maurin (ARG)
24. Cristobal Cruz (MEX)
25. Zahir Raheem (USA)
26. Wilson Alcorro (COL)
27. Cyril Thomas (FRA)
28. Eiichi Sugama (JAP)
29. Daniel Attah (NIG)
30. Toshikage Kimura (JAP)

SUPER BANTAMWEIGHTS
Champ: Willie Jorrin (USA)
1. Israel Vazquez (MEX)
2. Oscar Larios (MEX)
3. Kiattisak Chocchoi (THAI)
4. Paulie Ayala (USA)
5. Johnny Tapia (USA)
6. Salim Medjkoune (FRA)
7. Nadel Hussein (AUSTRL)
8. Youngjin Cho (KOR)
9. Arnel Barotillo (AUSTRL)
10. Kozo Ishii (JAP)
11. Lehlo Ledwaba (SA)
12. Wayne McCullough (IRE)
13. Junichi Watanabe (JAP)
14. Bones Adams (USA)
15. Emmanuel Lucero (USA)
16. Akihiro Kanai (JAP)
17. Manabu Fukushima (JAP)
18. Celestino Caballero (PAN)
19. Yober Ortega (VEN)
20. Fabio Oliva (ARG)
21. Wethya Singwangcha (THAI)
22. Joan Guzman (DR)
23. Angel Chacon (PR)
24. Mahyar Monshipour (FRA)
25. Hugo Soto (ARG)
26. Michael Alldis (GB)
27. Turcay Kaya (FRA)
28. Norihisa Tomimoto (JAP)
29. Jose Luis Valbuena (VEN)
30. Masakazu Sugawara (JAP)

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Champ: Veerapol Sahaprom (THAI)
1. Toshiaki Nishioka (JAP)
2. Genaro Garcia (USA)
3. Rafael Marquez (MEX)
4. Johnny Bredahl (DEN)
5. Diego Morales (MEX)
6. Spend Abazi (DEN)
7. Jess Maca (PHIL)
8. Noel Wilders (GB)
9. Abner Cordero (PHIL)
10. David Guerault (FRA)
11. Ricardo Vargas (MEX)
12. Mark Johnson (USA)
13. Julio Zarate (MEX)
14. Heriberto Ruiz (MEX)
15. Julio Gamboa (NIC)
16. Fabien Guillerme (FRA)
17. Jhonny Gonzalez (MEX)
18. Nobuaki Naka (JAP)
19. Francisco Mateos (MEX)
20. Moises Castro (NIC)
21. Debind Thapa (NEP)
22. Nicky Booth (GB)
23. Pete Frissina (USA)
24. Roger Gonzalez (USA)
25. Frankie DeMilo (SWE)
26. Ryuichi Minoriyama (JAP)
27. Fasan 3K-Battery (THAI)
28. Julio Cesar Medina (ARG)
29. Hyok Jun Kim (KOR)
30. Eduardo Escobedo (MEX)

SUPER FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Masamori Tokuyama (JAP)
1. Gerry Penalosa (PHIL)
2. Dimitri Kirilov (RUS)
3. Reynaldo Hurtado (COL)
4. Luis Bolanos (COL)
5. Saen Sow Ploenchit (THAI)
6. Malcolm Tunacao (PHIL)
7. Shingo Sasaki (JAP)
8. Jose Beranza (MEX)
9. Katsushige Kawashima (JAP)
10. Mauricio Pastrana (COL)
11. Celes Kobayashi (JAP)
12. Sot Sot Veeraphol (THAI)
13. Erick Lopez (MEX)
14. Medgoen Singsurat (THAI)
15. Kazuhiro Ryuko (JAP)
16. Eiji Kojima (JAP)
17. Julio Coronel (COL)
18. Takuya Kiya (JAP)
19. Luis Perez (NIC)
20. Oscar Andrade (MEX)
21. Alexander Knight (RUS)
22. Eric Barcelona (PHIL)
23. Ricardo Cordoba (PAN)
24. Sergio Santillan (ARG)
25. Tomas Rojas (MEX)
26. Trinidad Mendoza (MEX)
27. Jovy Oracion (PHIL)
28. Shin Ogata (JAP)
29. Roberto Bonilla (NIC)
30. Tat Torres (MEX)

FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Pongsaklek Wonjongkam (THAI)
1. Alexander Mahmutov (RUS)
2. Hidenobu Honda (JAP)
3. Hiroshi Nakano (JAP)
4. Wandee Chor Chareon (THAI)
5. Hussein Hussein (AUSTRL)
6. Randy Mangubat (PHIL)
7. Masaki Nakamuna (JAP)
8. Hawk Makepula (SA)
9. Takefumi Sakata (JAP)
10. Gerson Guerrero (MEX)
11. Everardo Morales (MEX)
12. Daisuke Naito (JAP)
13. Hayato Asai (JAP)
14. Alejandro Montiel (MEX)
15. Omar Narvaez (ARG)
16. Damaen Kelly (GB)
17. Luis Maldonado (MEX)
18. Jair Jimenez (COL)
19. Ivan Hernandez (MEX)
20. Koji Koyama (JAP)
21. Rolly Lunas (PHIL)
22. Lorenzo Parra (VEN)
23. Jason Booth (GB)
24. Evaristo Primero (MEX)
25. Peter Culshaw (GB)
26. Carlos Bouchan (MEX)
27. Gilberto Keb-Baas (MEX)
28. Alejandro Moreno (MEX)
29. Gabula Vabaza (SA)
30. Mimoun Chent (FRA)

LIGHT FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Yosam Choi (KOR)
1. Melchor Cob Castro (MEX)
2. Juanito Rubillar (PHIL)
3. Jesus Martinez (MEX)
4. Agustin Luna (MEX)
5. Saman Sorjaturong (THAI)
6. Bebis Mendoza (COL)
7. Eric Ortiz (MEX)
8. Vuyisile Bebe (SA)
9. Tatsuo Hayashida (JAP)
10. John Molina (COL)
11. Pilkoo Kang (KOR)
12. Victor Burgos (MEX)
13. Rodrigo Garcia (MEX)
14. Jun Kitano (JAP)
15. Rafael Lozano (SPA)
16. Joma Gamboa (PHIL)
17. Wendyl Janiola (PHIL)
18. Shingo Yamaguchi (JAP)
19. Jinho Kim (KOR)
20. Juan Centeno (NIC)
21. Flash Villacura (PHIL)
22. Ernesto Castro (NIC)
23. Manuel Vargas (MEX)
24. Minsoo Jang (KOR)
25. Andrea Sarritzu (ITA)
26. Omar Nino (MEX)
27. Keisuke Yokoyama (JAP)
28. Steve Msimango (SA)
29. Deende Kengkarun (THAI)
30. Samransak Singmanassak (THAI)

STRAWWEIGHTS
Champ: Jose Antonio Aguirre (MEX)
1. Khulile Makeba (SA)
2. Ernesto Rubillar (PHIL)
3. Isaac Bustos (MEX)
4. Hiroshi Nakajima (JAP)
5. Noel Tunacao (PHIL)
6. Yasuo Tokimitsu (JAP)
7. Heriberto Gijon (PHIL)
8. Noel Arambulet (VEN)
9. Hiroshi Matsumoto (JAP)
10. Chana Porpaoin (THAI)
11. Juan Palacios (NIC)
12. Makoto Suzuki (JAP)
13. Satoshi Kogumasaka (JAP)
14. Sarikalek O. Eakarin (THAI)
15. Rodel Mayol (PHIL)
16. Jairo Arango (PAN)
17. Hiroyuki Abe (JAP)
18. Manny Melchor (PHIL)
19. Omar Soto (MEX)
20. Fernando Luna (MEX)
21. Valentin Leon (MEX)
22. Wele Maqolo (SA)
23. Jaewon Kim (KOR)
24. Sizwe Sinyabi (SA)
25. Eagle Okuda (JAP)
26. Miguel Barrera (MEX)
27. Daisuke Iida (JAP)
28. Lorenzo Trejo (MEX)
29. Mawanda Sineko (SA)
30. Decho Bankluaygym (THAI)

IBF RATINGS
(Ratings as of April 2002)

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Champ: Lennox Lewis (GB)
1. Chris Byrd (USA)
2. Vacant
3. David Tua (NZ)
4. Hasim Rahman (USA)
5. Evander Holyfield (USA)
6. Jameel McCline (USA)
7. Monte Barrett (USA)
8. Fres Oquendo (USA)
9. Oliver McCall (USA)
10. Lance Whitaker (USA)
11. Clifford Etienne (USA)
12. Tim Witherspoon (USA)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Champ: Vassiliy Jirov (KAZ)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. O'Neil Bell (USA)
4. Alexander Gurov (UKR)
5. James Toney (USA)
6. Wayne Braithwaite (GUY)
7. Fabrice Tiozzo (FRA)
8. Kelvin Davis (USA)
9. Jorge Castro (ARG)
10. Virgil Hill (USA)
11. Louis Azille (DR)
12. Ramon Garbey (USA)

LT. HEAVYWEIGHTS
Champ: Roy Jones (USA)
1. Antonio Tarver (USA)
2. Vacant
3. Eric Harding (USA)
4. David Telesco (USA)
5. Derrick Harmon (USA)
6. Reggie Johnson (USA)
7. Glenn Kelly (AUSTRL)
8. Yawe Davis (ITA)
9. Montell Griffin (USA)
10. Julio Gonzalez (USA)
11. Glencoffe Johnson (USA)
12. Silvio Branco (ITA)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Champ: Sven Ottke (GER)
1. Thomas Tate (USA)
2. Vacant
3. Antwun Echols (USA)
4. Mads Larsen (DEN)
5. David Starie (GB)
6. Danilo Haussler (GER)
7. Markus Beyer (GER)
8. Omar Sheika (USA)
9. Sam Hill (USA)
10. Richard Grant (USA)
11. Fernando Zuniga (USA)
12. Syd Vanderpool (CAN)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Champ: Bernard Hopkins (USA)
1. Vacant
2. Felix Trinidad (PR)
3. Tito Mendoza (PAN)
4. Erland Betare (FRA)
5. Robert Allen (USA)
6. Keith Holmes (USA)
7. Carl Daniels (USA)
8. Francisco Castillejo (SPA)
9. Howard Eastman (GB)
10. Cristian Sanavia (ITA)
11. Raymond Joval (HOL)
12. Ali Ennebati (FRA)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Champ: Winky Wright (USA)
1. Bronco McKart (USA)
2. Vacant
3. Nader Hamdan (AUSTRL)
4. Angel Hernandez (USA)
5. Alex Bunema (USA)
6. Steve Roberts (GB)
7. Roman Karmazin (RUS)
8. J.C. Candelo (COL)
9. Mamadou Thiam (FRA)
10. Kassim Ouma (USA)
11. Jason Papillion (USA)
12. Michael Rask (DEN)

WELTERWEIGHTS
Champ: Michele Piccirillo (ITA)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Shane Mosley (USA)
4. Thomas Damgaard (DEN)
5. Hercules Kyvelos (CAN)
6. Danny Perez (USA)
7. Jose Rivera (USA)
8. Rafael Pineda (COL)
9. Cory Spinks (USA)
10. Julian Holland (AUSTRL)
11. Antonio Margarito (USA)
12. Santiago Samaniego (PAN)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
Champ: Kostya Tszyu (AUSTRL)
1. Ben Tackie (GHA)
2. Vacant
3. Arturo Gatti (USA)
4. Oktay Urkal (TUR)
5. Carlos Vilches (ARG)
6. James Leija (USA)
7. Micky Ward (USA)
8. Omar Weis (ARG)
9. Ray Oliveira (USA)
10. Teddy Reid (JAM)
11. Sharmba Mitchell (USA)
12. Terronn Millett (USA)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Champ: Paul Spadafora (USA)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Juan Lazcano (USA)
4. Victoriano Sosa (DR)
5. Julio Diaz (USA)
6. Angel Manfredy (USA)
7. Steve Johnston (USA)
8. Julian Wheeler (USA)
9. Leavander Johnson (USA)
10. Edson Nascimento (BRA)
11. Dennis Holbaek (DEN)
12. Raul Balbi (ARG)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
Champ: Steve Forbes (USA)
1. Vacant
2. David Santos (USA)
3. Philip Ndou (SA)
4. Ernesto Zepeda (MEX)
5. Carlos Hernandez (USA)
6. Jesus Chavez (USA)
7. Alejandro Gonzalez (MEX)
8. Luis Lizarraga (USA)
9. Orlando Salido (MEX)
10. Lamont Pearson (USA)
11. Daniel Alicea (USA)
12. Nate Campbell (USA)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Champ: Manuel Medina (MEX)
1. Juan Manuel Marquez (MEX)
2. Vacant
3. Oscar Larios (MEX)
4. Frankie Toledo (USA)
5. Johnny Tapia (USA)
6. Robbie Peden (AUSTRL)
7. Oscar Leon (PR)
8. Victor Polo (COL)
9. Michael Brodie (ENG)
10. Naseem Hamed (ENG)
11. David Toledo (USA)
12. John Michael Johnson (USA)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
Champ: Manny Pacquaio (PHIL)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Jose Luis Valbuena (ARG)
4. F. Rakkiatgym (INDO)
5. Salim Medjkoune (FRA)
6. Enrique Sanchez (MEX)
7. Fernando Velardez (USA)
8. Bones Adams (USA)
9. Vladyslav Antonov (RUS)
10. Nadel Hussein (AUSTRL)
11. Arnel Barotillo (AUSTRL)
12. Wayne McCullough (IRE)

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Champ: Tim Austin (USA)
1. Rafael Marquez (MEX)
2. Vacant
3. Johnny Bredahl (DEN)
4. Pete Frissina (USA)
5. Diego Morales (MEX)
6. Adan Vargas (MEX)
7. Genaro Garcia (MEX)
8. Mark Johnson (USA)
9. Roger Gonzalez (USA)
10. Ratanachai Vorapin (THAI)
11. Toshiaki Nakajima (JAP)
12. Spend Abazi (DEN)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
Champ: Felix Machado (VEN)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Martin Castillo (MEX)
4. Saen Sor Ploenchit (THAI)
5. Gerry Penalosa (PHIL)
6. Ricardo Vargas (USA)
7. Samson 3K-Battery (THAI)
8. Luis Bolano (COL)
9. Mauricio Pastrana (COL)
10. Julio Coronel (COL)
11. Adonis Rivas (NIC)
12. Jesus Rojas (VEN)

FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Irene Pacheco (COL)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Alejandro Montiel (MEX)
4. Alexander Mahmutov (RUS)
5. David Guerault (FRA)
6. Damaen Kelly (GB)
7. Hussein Hussein (LEB)
8. Wandee Chareon (THAI)
9. Mike Trejo (USA)
10. Randy Mangubat (PHIL)
11. Angel Priolo (COL)
12. Jason Booth (GB)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Ricardo Lopez (MEX)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Melchor Cob Castro (MEX)
4. Jose Burgos (MEX)
5. Alexander Sanchez (PR)
6. Bebis Mendoza (COL)
7. Saman Sorjaturong (THAI)
8. Noel Tunacao (PHIL)
9. Jorge Arce (MEX)
10. Juan Keb Baas (MEX)
11. Fahlan Sakreerin (THAI)
12. Celso Danggud (PHIL)

MINI FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Roberto Leyva (MEX)
1. Vacant
2. Miguel Barrera (MEX)
3. Daniel Reyes (COL)
4. Ernesto Rubillar (PHIL)
5. Hiroshi Matsumoto (JAP)
6. Noel Arambulet (VEN)
7. Hiroshi Nakajima (JAP)
8. Joma Gamboa (PHIL)
9. Keitaro Hoshino (JAP)
10. Muhammad Rachman (INDO)
11. Eriberto Gejon (PHIL)
12. Isaac Bustos (MEX)

CLASSIC

From The Ring, March 1988

HEARNS YEARNS FOR LEONARD, HAGLER

"Hit Man" Not Interested in Unifying Middleweight Title

By Shelby Strothers

Tommy Hearns wanted to serve notice to the boxing world that he wasn't finished yet, and that he still lived in the 313 area code, if Marvelous Marvin Hagler and Sugar Ray Leonard wanted to call. Hearns' knockout of Juan Domingo Roldan prompted everything from motorcades in Detroit to visits to the White House.

Right now, to answer a common question that has been flung at him constantly for the last few months, Thomas Hearns would like the boxing world to know what his immediate plans are.

"Go to sleep," said the 29-year-old champion with a weary sigh. "I'm tired. It seems like I lived a whole life in the last month. So it's time to rest."

Then, with a wicked smile, Hearns added, "Of course, if anyone wants to reach me, I'm still at the 313 area code. I will accept calls from either a Mr. Hagler or a Mr. Leonard. Even collect calls."

It has been hectic lately for Thomas Hearns. Of course, his knockout of Juan Domingo Roldan prompted everything. Hearns' quest to become the first fighter to win "world championships" in four different weight classes technically came to an end as the battered Argentine was counted out with 59 seconds left in the fourth round at the Las Vegas Hilton.

"Then everything seemed to speed up on me," Hearns said.

First there was the flight to Los Angeles the next day. A guest spot on *The Late Show*. Then back home to Detroit and a motorcade parade November 4 through downtown in his honor as Thomas Hearns Day officially kicked off. The

"The Hit Man" and trainer Emanuel Steward were "95 percent certain" they would be able to lure former middleweight champ Hagler out of retirement for a rematch. Just three years earlier, Hagler and Hearns put on one of the most memorable wars in boxing history.

games to play, and places to go shopping for dresses, and toys, and candy. And "The Hit Man" stayed one tired daddy.

"So now I sleep. I rest. I do nothing," he said. "I own history now. I don't really need anything else except maybe a couple of dates with Mr. Hagler and Mr. Leonard. I would like to avenge the only two losses I've had. I would like to erase them."

His victory over Roldan, which brought him the WBC middleweight title, is not considered by some to be the historic achievement Hearns considers it to be. Many critics, including THE RING, maintain Hearns has won only fractions of world championships. None were undisputed. None were unified. Because of the alphabet nature of boxing, where the WBA, WBC, and IBF all have their own versions of world champion for each weight division, the notion of winning four championships at four different class-

mayor presented him the keys to the city. There was a luncheon in his honor. A dinner. A party. Another party.

"I bet I made about 15 speeches in that one day."

Then another plane to catch. This one headed east. Washington, D.C., and a press conference where Hearns' trainer Emanuel Steward said it was "95 percent certain" that Marvelous Marvin Hagler was going to agree to fight Hearns sometime next year.

That the press conference was held in Washington, which is right next to Maryland, which is where Sugar Ray Leonard lives, was interpreted as a not-so-thinly-veiled jab.

"Actually," Hearns said, "that was all coincidence. We were in Washington to meet President Reagan."

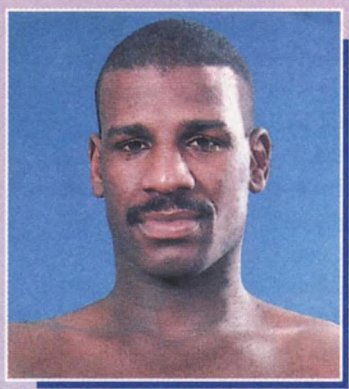
The short meeting with the President at the White House was little more than an exclamation point to the wild rush of events and people, and places, and things to do. Arriving back at his Southfield suburb estate, Hearns declared the only person he wished to see or speak to for the next week was his five-year-old daughter Natasha.

"My pride and joy," Hearns said, his mood softening. "Boxing is my business, but sometimes I have to let things slide so I can be with my baby girl."

And there were cartoons to watch and

After dispensing of Roldan, Hearns' top priority was getting home to see his "pride and joy," five-year-old daughter Natasha. "Boxing is my business," Hearns said, showing a rare soft side, "but sometimes I have to let things slide so I can be with my baby girl."

THE RING RATINGS, March 1988



Michael Spinks

HEAVYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Michael Spinks, St. Louis, MO
1. **Mike Tyson,** Catskill, NY
2. **Evander Holyfield,** Atlanta, GA
3. **Tony Tucker,** Grand Rapids, MI
4. **Tim Witherspoon,** Philadelphia, PA
5. **Pinklon Thomas,** Pontiac, MI
6. **Carl Williams,** New York
7. **Trevor Berbick,** Florida
8. **Adilson Rodrigues,** Brazil
9. **Tyrell Biggs,** Philadelphia, PA
10. **Mike Weaver,** Diamond Bar, CA

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Vacant
1. **Charles Williams,** Mansfield, OH
2. **Virgil Hill,** Grand Forks, ND
3. **Bobby Czyz,** New Jersey
4. **Leslie Stewart,** Trinidad
5. **Dennis Andries,** England
6. **Ramzi Hassan,** Campo, CA
7. **Don Lalonde,** Canada
8. **Chong-Pal Park,** Korea
9. **Lindell Holmes,** Detroit, MI
10. **Joe Lasisi,** Nigeria

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
World Champ: Vacant
1. **Thomas Hearns,** Detroit, MI
2. **Marvin Hagler,** Brockton, MA
3. **Frank Tate,** Houston, TX
4. **Sumbu Kalambay,** Italy
5. **Mike McCallum,** Jamaica
6. **Michael Nunn,** Sherman Oaks, CA
7. **Michael Olajide,** Canada
8. **Iran Barkley,** New York, NY
9. **Matthew Hilton,** Canada
10. **Herol Graham,** England

WELTERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Jorge Vaca, Mexico
1. **Marlon Starling,** Hartford, CT
2. **Lloyd Honeyghan,** England
3. **Maurice Blocker,** Washington, D.C.
4. **Mark Breland,** Brooklyn, NY
5. **Simon Brown,** Washington, D.C.
6. **Rollin Williams,** Phoenix, AZ
7. **Juan Martin Coggi,** Argentina
8. **Tyrone Trice,** Detroit, MI
9. **Roger Mayweather,** Las Vegas, NV
10. **Frankie Warren,** Corpus Christi, TX

LIGHTWEIGHTS
World Champ: Vacant
1. **Julio Cesar Chavez,** Mexico
2. **Vinny Pazienza,** Cranston, RI
3. **Pernell Whitaker,** Norfolk, VA
4. **Jose Luis Ramirez,** Mexico
5. **Edwin Rosario,** Puerto Rico
6. **Meldrick Taylor,** Philadelphia, PA
7. **Greg Haugen,** Auburn, WA
8. **Primo Ramos,** Mexico
9. **Rocky Lockridge,** Mt. Laurel, NJ
10. **Amancio Castro,** Colombia

FEATHERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Antonio Esparragoza, Venezuela
1. **Azumah Nelson,** Ghana
2. **Steve Cruz,** Ft. Worth, TX
3. **Calvin Grove,** Coatesville, PA
4. **Jeff Fenech,** Australia
5. **Julio Gervacio,** Dominican Republic
6. **Victor Callejas,** Puerto Rico
7. **Hector Lopez,** Glendale, CA
8. **Marcos Villasana,** Mexico
9. **Antonio Rivera,** Puerto Rico
10. **Louie Espinoza,** Phoenix, AZ

BANTAMWEIGHTS
World Champ: Vacant
1. **Miguel Lora,** Colombia
2. **Khaosai Galaxy,** Thailand
3. **Sugar Baby Rojas,** Colombia
4. **Kelvin Seabrooks,** Charlotte, NC
5. **Raul Perez,** Mexico
6. **Wilfredo Vasquez,** Puerto Rico
7. **Santos Laciar,** Argentina
8. **Gilberto Roman,** Mexico
9. **Frankie Duarte,** Venice, CA
10. **Gaby Canizales,** Laredo, TX

FLYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Sot Chitalada, Thailand
1. **Jung-Koo Chang,** Korea
2. **Fidel Bassa,** Colombia
3. **Myung-Woo Yuh,** Korea
4. **Hilario Zapata,** Panama
5. **Chang-Ho Choi,** Korea
6. **Gabriel Bernal,** Mexico
7. **Dodie Penalosa,** Philippines
8. **Paul Gonzalez,** Los Angeles, CA
9. **Benedicto Murillo,** Panama
10. **Duke McKenzie,** England

es has become diluted to an extent.

Mention this to Hearns and his fatigue evaporates. Genuine anger erupts.

"Look, all Thomas Hearns can do is fight at the time in which he lives. Babe Ruth never got to play against today's baseball players. I never got to fight back in those days when there was only one champion for each class. History for me has been made. I did it and nobody else ever did. My titles are all legitimate. I'm not worried because people try to condemn my achievements. I know what I did. And since nobody else ever did it, history is mine," Hearns said.

He is asked why, after knocking out Dennis Andries and winning the WBC light heavyweight championship earlier in the year, he never stayed around long enough to defend it. Hearns' answer is a scoffing laugh and several seconds of silence.

Then he said slowly, "My goal all along was those four titles. That is what I wanted. It [the WBC title] was just one of the steps I had to take. Once I got to it, I had to take the next one. I didn't want to be held back."

Asked if he would be interested in satisfying all the world by collecting each sliver of each weight class, Hearns laughed again.

"Why? What benefit would there be for me to do that? I have nothing to prove. All my dues are paid in full. I've done everything everyone's asked me to do

Hearns wanted to make a point that he owned history by winning titles in four separate weight classes, after destroying Roldan. Many critics, including THE RING, were reluctant to consider Hearns' special achievement as historic, maintaining that Hearns only won a fraction of those world titles.

already. Really, seriously, what benefit would it be for Thomas Hearns to fight Frank Tate? How am I supposed to get excited for Michael Nunn? Ray and Marvin—sure, bring them on. I want my revenge. I want it badly. But anything else, anyone else? For Thomas Hearns, there would be nothing to gain."

Against Roldan, Hearns displayed a heretofore-unseen ability to grab and clinch when he was in trouble. Early in the fourth round, Roldan unloaded a hook on Hearns' chin and The Hit Man's eyes rolled.

"I thought, *Oh no, here we go again*," Hearns remembered. It had happened in 1981, 14th round against Leonard. Again in the third round of his fight with Hagler.

"But I finally learned what to do in those cases."

First and foremost, swallow pride.

"For the longest time, my pride was too high. I felt I couldn't get hurt. Not me. Not The Hit Man. But I learned. Especially against Marvin. When you got trouble, grab hold. Ride it out. Any man can get hurt. And when he does, he must learn how to survive. Or else."

In the months leading up to the Roldan fight, Hearns worked specifically on the maneuver, which is little more than a combination bearhug and waltz position. Steward said if Hearns had developed this tactic earlier in his career, "he'd probably still be undefeated and there wouldn't be anything to avenge.

"Tommy has grown up. It's simple as that. He's become a complete fighter because he got that little immaturity that he's the baddest cat and he's Superman, and nobody could hurt him out of his system. When Roldan tagged him with a good shot, Tommy grabbed hold. He tied up Roldan and then he got his second wind. His head cleared and he knocked him out."

And now, said Hearns, "I'm king of a country where nobody else lives. All the time they've been having boxing, the whole history of the world, nobody ever did what I did. That's what I showed the world when I beat Roldan. That's what President Reagan told me."

Hearns slammed a fist into the table. Satisfaction. Twice his career has needed to be salvaged. To his critics, Hearns suggests that spiraling feeling "is the highest high and the lowest low. To be on top of the world, then down on the mat, then back on top of the world. God, it's such a feeling.

"Right before I met the President, while I was waiting for that big door to open, I was thinking about it all. Man, me, a skinny guy from the east side of Detroit meeting the President. I wasn't nervous. I was amazed. I used to have to ride the bus across town to the gym, to the Kronk. Every day. I hated that bus; I called it the Iron Pimp. Now I was at the White House. Damn. If you don't give up, you can do just about everything."

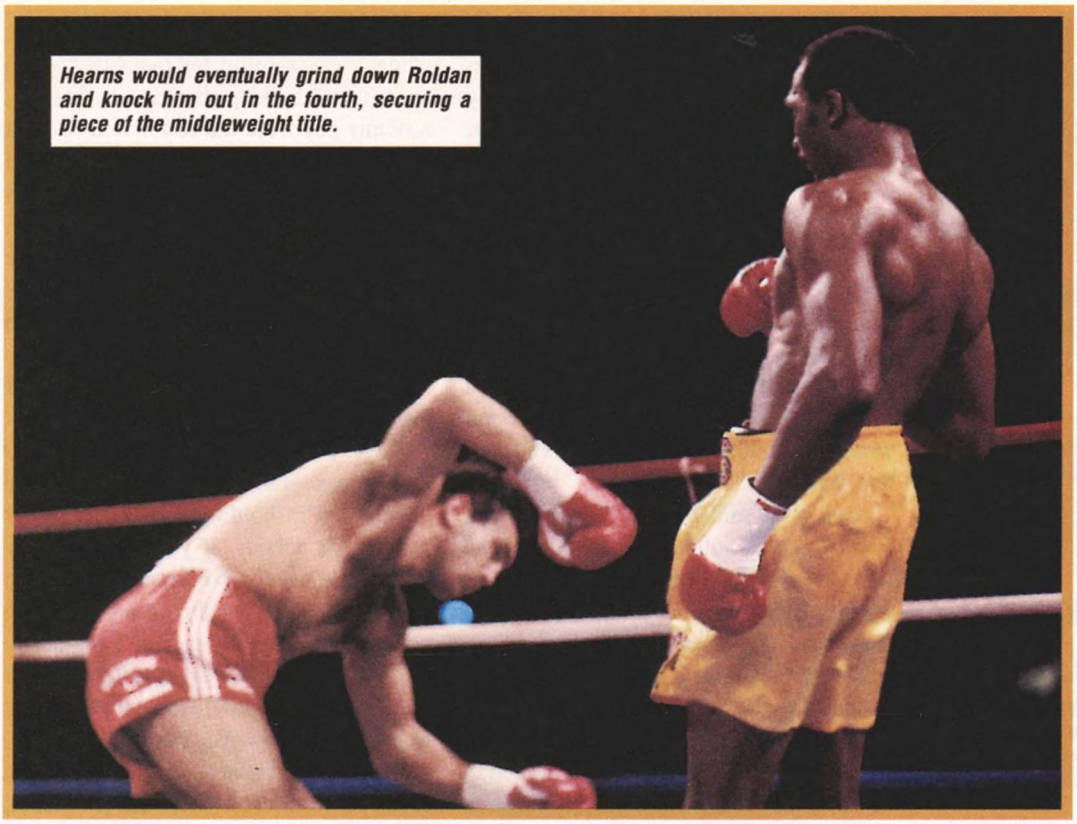
And his immense pride oozed back into the predicament of the future.

"See, boxing is my business. It's what I do to make a living. But now, things are different. I'm holding the dice. I'm not waiting for nobody. If you want to know what made me come back after those two losses, it is this: I had to get back in the position where nobody could dictate to me. Now, I don't need Ray Leonard or Marvin Hagler. Now, whether they want to believe it or not, they need me."

Hearns repeats again he wants to fight each. Whoever comes first doesn't matter. He also is quick to add he won't do anything for free.

"Boxing is my business, like I said. Either of those two fights would make a

Steward said if Hearns had learned to grab and hold when in trouble earlier in his career, The Hit Man would have still been undefeated and there wouldn't have been anything to avenge. Against Roldan, holding helped him survive a rough patch, when he was shaken by a hook.



Hearns would eventually grind down Roldan and knock him out in the fourth, securing a piece of the middleweight title.

lot of money because it is what the people want. It is what they want so bad that they will pay to see it. If only one or both of those two guys will do it. See, I don't have no wife that I have to ask if it's okay to fight again. I don't have nobody I can use as an excuse. I'm not scared."

Hearns backs off, perhaps realizing he was starting to sound like one-half of the standard prefight hyperbole so common these days. And as he relents, he reverses field.

"I went from 148 pounds to 173 pounds back down to 160. That's what? Up 25 pounds then down 13. I think that's a great accomplishment and I'm sorry if everyone doesn't appreciate it. I know it's something Ray Leonard would never consider. Do you think Hagler would ever consider trying to get down to 148? I can't believe people would try to find something wrong with my achievement," Hearns said.

The decade of Tommy Hearns—he began his pro career on the day after Thanksgiving in 1977—is over. Time to start a new one, he said.

"It has all been for a purpose. The way things happen and the order they happen. If I had beat Leonard, if I had beat Hagler, if I was undefeated, things would not be as good. I'm a better person for it all. I know what defeat is. I am bigger because I have had to scramble and survive when I was down. I have had to learn how to hang on. But know what—I'm still here. And I'm better. I'm 29, a young man with a lot of places to go. Still a lot of places to go."

Then there is almost an inaudible click. Like Tommy Hearns is changing channels again. Seeing something neither inside nor outside his home. A blur of mental inventory. Steward and Prentiss Byrd—the two constants in his career, advisers and trainers and friends. The early days, when carefully selected opponents were destroyed and The Hit Man image grew huge. The stunning disappointment of the Leonard fight, falling through the ring ropes, losing a fight the judges' cards said he was winning. The long comeback, the waiting games. The time on the Carson Show when Hearns was so nervous he couldn't hit the speed bag right ("That's another rematch I'd like"). The savage disposal of Roberto Duran that set up the eight minutes of barbarity with Hagler. And that numbing disappointment, carried to his ring stool by a bodyguard in a tuxedo, truly the Hurt Man. And then the second long climb. The prize winnings have been held on to, invested wisely. The aura has had the dents hammered back out. It is, as Thomas Hearns said, "like a new life. Like a warm summer day has landed on top of me and won't go away. I'm 29 but I'm younger. When I'm 30, when I'm 35—who knows? It still might be that same warm day."

The look is now clean-cut. No more blown-out Afro. No more greasy kid stuff, Jeri curls. It is now business suits and close-cropped hair. The beard is for show, for menacing opponents, the last vestige of The Hit Man. The passion of race cars has been put aside. His top-fuel dragster, The Hit-mobile, is in a garage with no plans soon for use. The Lamborghinis, with the two fuel tanks and the speedometer that registers three times the legal limit, have been sold.

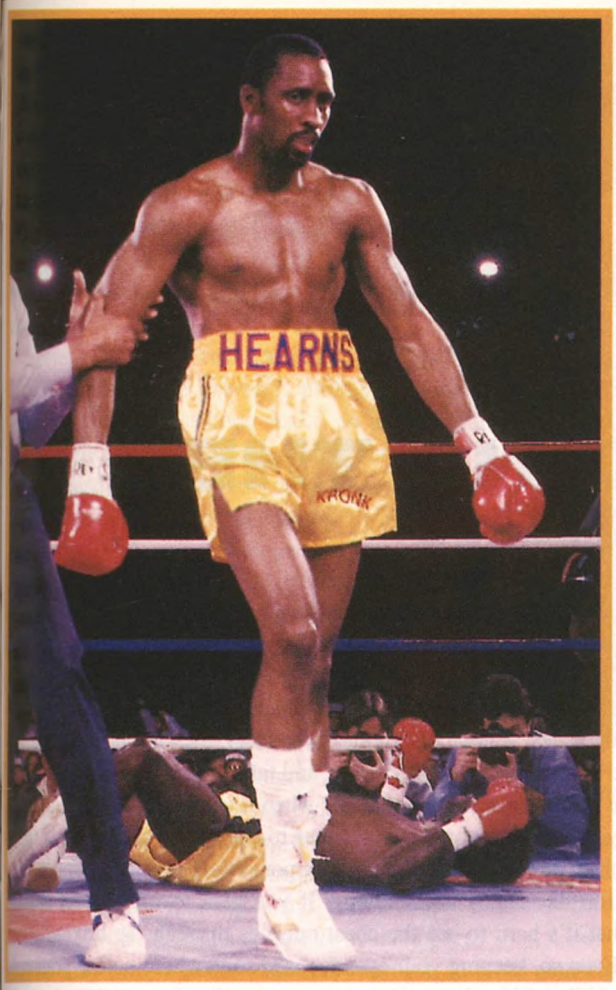
"Those kind of cars are like wild horses. They belong in a pasture or somewhere where they can be allowed to run free. Detroit and its traffic lights on every corner is no place for a Lamborghini."

His little daughter is his favorite toy. His job no longer dominates his life. Things have become more patient for Tommy Hearns. And so, a few days before Thanksgiving, he reflects. The 10 years of The Hit Man fast-forward, then rewind. Is there a place to throw a flag of perspective? A moment that stands out above the rest?

The question bothers Hearns. He scowls. Then blinks and his somberness overwhelms.

"James Shuler," he said in almost a whisper. "I think I learned so much about life in that one week."

On March 10, 1986, Hearns knocked out Shuler in the first round and won the North American Boxing Federation middleweight title. It took 73 seconds. Until then, the whispers were that Tommy Hearns was on his way out. The loss to Hagler had stolen his heart. His fragile hands could no longer wield damage. It



The fate of former opponent James Shuler (pictured getting crushed by Hearns in one round) gave The Hit Man perspective on how to live his life. Shuler died in a motorcycle accident just a few days after his fight with Hearns, who attended the funeral.

took 73 seconds to make all the clouds go away.

"Then just a couple days later," Hearns said, "James Shuler was dead."

A motorcycle accident and funeral in Philadelphia. Hearns walked up to the casket and laid the heavy belt he had just won upon it.

"That funeral touched me. It affected me. James Shuler was a nice man and young. So damn young. To see him go was hard. It opened my eyes. It showed me I had to be ready for the next day. Not the next year. Make your plans, live your dreams. But be ready for the next day. It's the most precious, the most valuable."

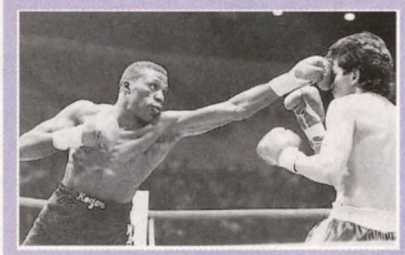
With that, the thought turned to Natasha. The Hit Man had to excuse himself. He had a phone call to make. And the once-menacing hands that have ravaged a generation of fighters in four divisions were almost dainty as the number was dialed.

Just a call to say hello. Daddy and daughter, giggling on the phone. In December, Johnny Carson has asked him back. In January, a vacation trip to the Far East and Orient. Then, back to work, his business. Enough history; time for economics. The boxer, the puncher, always the fighter.

"Still got those places I need to go. People I need to meet . . . again." ■

THE RING, March 1988

The Cover: Tommy Hearns posed with all of his "world title" belts after winning a title in a fourth weight class when he beat Juan Domingo Roldan. "The Hit Man's" primary remaining goal at the time was to avenge his only two losses, to Sugar Ray Leonard and Marvelous Marvin Hagler.



Rocky And Roger: Rocky Lockridge and Roger Mayweather both suffered crushing defeats, but had the resiliency to rebound and win titles. After losing to Pernell Whitaker, Mayweather took the WBC super lightweight title from Rene Arredondo (pictured). Julio Cesar Chavez thrashed Lockridge, who then went on to beat Barry Michael to win the IBF junior lightweight title.

Panama Boxing Sinking: Under the weight of political unrest, stirred by General Manuel Noriega, boxing was going through a difficult period in Panama. Drugs and crime were destroying the same areas of the South American country that once produced greats like Roberto Duran (pictured).

Here's Blood In Your Eye: Boxing fans have always loved bleeders, because they tend to be tough and recklessly courageous. THE RING examined the famous bleeders in boxing, like Vito Antuofermo, who typically had blood streaming from his face even in his victories, including this one over Rich Beranek in 1984.

Fighter Of The Month: Julio Cesar Chavez chopped down Edwin Roario to easily win the WBA lightweight title. The undefeated Chavez dominated the Puerto Rican hero in practically every round, before finally ending the fight in the 11th. Chavez constantly drove Rosario into the corners with brutal hooks and uppercuts, and had Rosario's left eye swollen shut when the fight was stopped.

THE A, B, C & DEAS OF BOXING

By Tommy Deas

DEFENDING THE LEFT HOOK

You've watched the world's best fighters and read about them in this magazine, and now you want to give boxing a try, or at least learn a little more about the mechanics of the sport. Welcome to THE RING'S bi-monthly instructional feature on boxing's basics. Bear in mind, the techniques described here are just one of many approaches to the Sweet Science. The most important thing is to find a good coach and follow his instructions. All instructions on these pages are geared for an orthodox, or right-handed, stance. If you are left-handed, merely turn everything around.

A properly thrown left hook is designed to do more than score a point. This punch is meant t inflict major damage, so learning to defend against the hook is an important part of you pugilistic education.

Unlike the left jab or right cross, the hook doesn't take a direct route to its target, so simply keep ing your hands up in a proper boxing stance is not a deterrent. Fortunately, the circular path the hoo follows gives you a little more time to recognize what is coming and take defensive action.

To defend against the hook, you first must learn to anticipate when it is coming in your direction You should always keep a sharp eye on your opponent at all times to see what punches he is throw ing at you. Many top trainers teach their boxers to look at an opponent's chest, because the ches muscles give an early warning before the hands start moving. If you plan to fight as an amateur however, you will quickly learn that it's hard to see the chest muscles through the boxing jersey required for amateur competition. Even so, keeping your eyes focused somewhere below your oppo nent's face, on his gloves or the middle of his chest, allows you to see the first motions he make when he begins to throw a punch. It also keeps him from guessing what you're up to by watchin

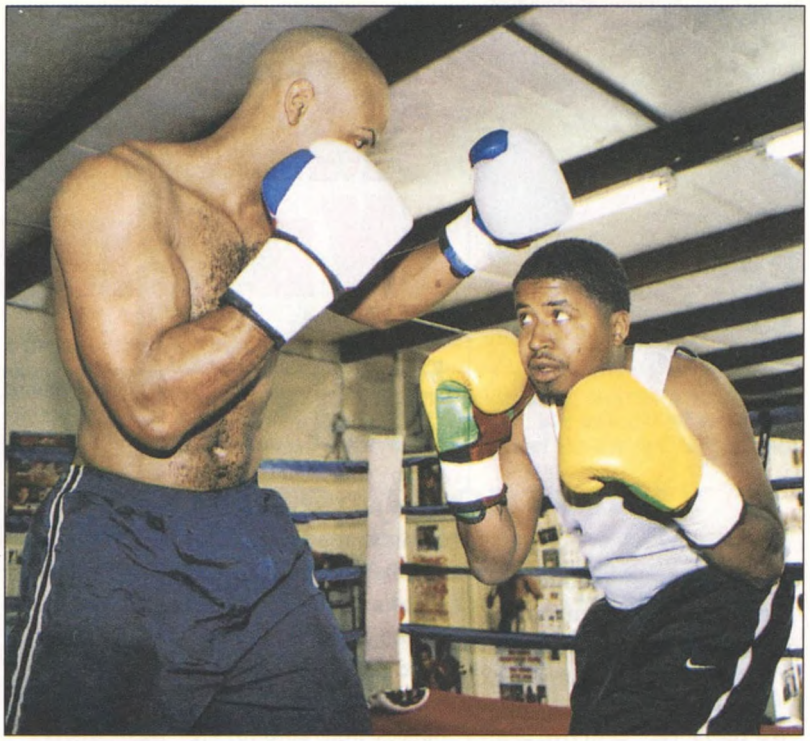
The easiest way to defend against the left hook is by blocking it with your right hand. In this photo, amateu junior middleweight Roshard Binion demonstrates where to position the right glove as he picks off the hook professional light heavyweight Demetrius Nalls. Timing the hook is key.

your eyes, which helps disguise your offensive intentions.

When your opponent starts to throw a left hook, he will move his left hand to his left (your right), away from his face. If the punch begins with an outward motion, rather than the straightforward thrust of the left jab, it's a good guess that he's cranking up a hook. As soon as you see the left hand start to move in that direction, you need to take defensive action against the hook.

There are basically two ways to defend against the hook. Learning these moves is probably easier than learning to throw the hook itself, so as a beginner these defensive lessons should help put you a little further ahead defensively as you practice to become a more effective offensive fighter.

The first, and easiest, way to avoid the left hook is to block it. In your basic boxing stance, your right hand should already be a few inches below your right eye, resting against your cheek. To block the hook, simply move your right hand in between the path of the punch and its intended target. To do this, you must make a quick assessment of where the punch is aimed and move your hand accordingly. If he's throwing at your chin, drop the right hand down and forward slightly. If the hook is headed toward your ear, move your right hand back and up until it is in place to block the punch. As the hook lands against your right hand, rock a couple of inches to your left, rolling with the punch to take away its impact.



The best defense against the hook is to bend and duck beneath it. Notice that Binion's eyes remain fixed on his opponent rather than toward the floor.

You may find it easier, especially at first, to open your right hand when you see a hook coming. This gives you more surface area on the back of the glove to block with, and leaves your opponent with very little open target area to aim at. The drawback of blocking with an open glove is that it inhibits your ability to throw a quick counterpunch, as you must first close your hand and make a fist again to launch an effective right counter. An open-handed block may give you a better edge defensively, however, until you are more comfortable with your ability to block the hook.

The most common mistake most beginners make in learning to block the hook is reaching for the incoming punch. If you misjudge, you have left yourself more vulnerable than if you had done nothing at all. Even if you do reach out and block it, you are in no position to throw a counter. Let the hook come to you.

Another way to defend against the hook is to duck under it. Executed properly, this technique will leave your opponent off-balance and wide open when the punch sails over your head. This defensive move, however, is a little more difficult to master, and will take more practice to get it right. To duck a hook, you must bend your knees as you see the punch coming and bend forward slightly at the waist. After you have successfully avoided the punch, just spring back into position.

The difficult part of ducking under a hook is learning to properly time and judge the path of the punch. If you don't get low enough, you may take a hard shot to the side of the head. You must learn to make a quick assessment of where the punch is headed and duck a few inches lower where you are safe. In time, you will learn to roll to your right under the hook, allowing you to spring back into punching position a little quicker to take advantage of the opening.

The biggest mistake most beginners make in ducking a hook is leaning too far forward. This leaves you looking at the ground, or, at best, your opponent's waist. From this position, you can't see if he's throwing a followup and you will not be ready to take the offensive. The best rule of thumb is to make sure your head never gets in front of your left knee. If it does, you have leaned over too far.

As with all defensive moves in boxing, defending the hook is a matter of timing that only gets better with experience. The more you do it, the better your reactions will get. Always remember to keep your left hand up so you don't avoid a hook only to run into a followup right.

To practice defending the hook, start by finding a mirror and working these defensive moves into your shadowboxing. Imagine the hook coming and take defensive action. Start slowly, until you've worked out the motions involved, then work your way up to full speed. If you only practice offense when you shadowbox, you will find yourself unprepared when the time comes to trade punches with a live opponent who has an offensive arsenal of his own.

After you are satisfied that you have your defensive motions down, find a partner and shadowbox with him. Have him throw hooks your way, slowly at first, and respond with your defensive moves. Take turns on offense and defense. This will give you a better sense of timing than practicing defense by yourself.

Keep working on these moves in the gym every day to make sure your defensive skills stay as sharp as your offense. Boxing is the art of hitting without getting hit, so make it a goal to get better at both every time you practice. ■

Tommy Deas is a sportswriter for the Tuscaloosa (Alabama) News and a trainer of professional and amateur boxers.

PHOTOS BY BRANDON K. PIERCE

COME OUT WRITING

Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, The Ring, P.O. Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034. Or e-mail letters to comeoutwriting@yahoo.com. E-mailed letters will include the writer's e-mail address unless a city and state of origin is provided.

RYAN GETS THE BYRD

Who needs a bicycle? Hands at his side, back to the ropes, Chris Byrd still managed to avoid this right hand from David Tua. Reader James Moore takes columnist Jeff Ryan to task for writing that Byrd would "qualify for the Tour de France" if he ever fought Lennox Lewis.

In the April 2002 issue of THE RING, Jeff Ryan made an asinine comment about Chris Byrd's "bicycle." This statement is ludicrous. Byrd does not use a bicycle, and that is what makes him unique. He stands toe-to-toe, embarrassing, humiliating, and annoying his opposition. Chris will bob and weave, twist and turn, bend and bow. He does not, however, ride a bike. Punches fly past his head, near his head, and around his head. He makes opponents endure a frustrating in-your-face disgrace.

For every punch that misses him, Byrd retaliates with a flurry of pitty-pat punches. While the big guys throw bricks at him, Byrd throws back spitballs—and still he dominates them. Some people find his technique boring. I feel that his constant and consistent flirtation with disaster is exciting. Boxing never had a heavyweight Willie Pep before; now we do.

Yo, Jeff. Byrd doesn't ride a bicycle, because he doesn't need one. The man knows how to duck.

JAMES MOORE
Reading, PA

NO STRIPPING

I really like THE RING'S new championship policy, and I'm eager to see who will win belts in the coming months. But how would you handle a situation like when Muhammad Ali was stripped in exile? Would THE RING strip Ali, too?

STEVE KODIAK
Prince George, British Columbia

[Editor's note: Unlike many of the state athletic commissions and governing bodies, THE RING continued to recognize Ali as heavyweight champion throughout much of his exile. Editor and founder Nat Fleischer believed Ali deserved his day in court, and was vindicated in this belief when the United States Supreme Court overturned Ali's draft dodging conviction. If a similar situation occurred today, THE RING would follow Fleischer's example.]

VALUE FOR MONEY

Why is there so much idolization and focus on the heavyweight division? Is it because people want to see two guys fighting who they would never dream of fighting themselves, or is it just because a spectacular kayo is more likely to occur?

I have seen only two heavyweight fights in recent years that got my blood pumping: Cliff Etienne

vs. Lawrence Clay-Bey and Ike Ibeabuchi-David Tua. Other than those two bouts, most heavyweight fights are slower and display less skill and ability than the bouts in smaller weight classes. If you want value for money, stick to the middleweights and below.

ANDY O'ROURKE
Liverpool, England

STILL ANGRY

I just finished reading the piece entitled, "Leonard-Hagler Revisited" by Brian Doogan in the June issue of THE RING. Unfortunately, 15 years has not quelled my anger at the injustice visited upon all boxing fans that night. I won't go so far as to say it was the worst decision of all-time—there have certainly been many bad ones—but none top it; that's for sure. Most rounds saw Hagler chase Leonard around the ring for 2:30, initiate all the action, and land every significant blow. Then Leonard would break into the Ali shuffle for 30 seconds, land a flurry of blows to Hagler's gloves, and work the pro-Leonard crowd into a frenzy. Somehow, unbelievably, two judges bought into the con job, and gave Leonard the decision. That doesn't even warrant comment; it was such an abomination.

Fifteen years later, it's still a shame. Hagler defeated Leonard beyond a shadow of a doubt, and any knowledgeable fight fan that witnessed this debacle agrees.

DARREN PAULSON
Vacaville, CA

THANKS, BERNARD

I want to thank Bernard Hopkins for making me look like a genius. You see, from the moment the fight between Hopkins and Felix Trinidad was announced, I told everybody that not only would he beat Trinidad, but that he would destroy him. Thanks not only from me (a Philly native), but also from all the great Philadelphia middleweights from the past. You made us all very proud.

PAUL J. SMITH
St. Petersburg, FL

Marvelous Marvin Hagler and Sugar Ray Leonard meet the media prior to their historic 1987 encounter. A recent article in THE RING revisiting their controversial battle got reader Darren Paulson riled up again. Paulson, like many other fans, believes Hagler should have won the decision.

Former WBC featherweight titlist Kevin Kelley remains a fan favorite. He's pictured here with reader Brian Bluhn, who writes to tell us how gracious "The Flushing Flash" was when he met him at a fight card in Reno.

MISSED OPPORTUNITY

I believe that we missed an opportunity for a golden heavyweight era in the 1990s. If Mike Tyson hadn't gone to jail, he would have fought Evander Holyfield in 1992. Tyson would also have probably fought Riddick Bowe and George Foreman—two fights I would have loved to see. And if Bowe had not relinquished the WBC belt and had instead fought Lennox Lewis, that would have been another exciting fight.

Full credit to Holyfield, who fought Tyson, Foreman, Bowe, Lewis, and Michael Moorer. That's why he was such a great champion.

We will never know what we missed because, except for Holyfield, most of these heavyweights never fought each other.

MICHAEL CAPPARELLI
Melbourne, Australia

NIX NADY!

Incompetence was, once again, brought to an all-time low in the Kostya Tszyu-Zab Judah bout. Judah had beaten the count; there was one second left in the round; a one-minute rest would follow. And Jay Nady stops the fight. Unbelievable?

Considering Nady's track record of nitpicking and his many questionable decisions in the past, why, I ask, do those in charge choose a guy like this to ref a world title fight? His ridiculous stoppage of this fight cheated the fans, but more importantly affected the futures of both fighters. After this pitiful display of stupidity, Nady should never referee another boxing match.

DR. EDWARD L. MARTIN
Asheville, NC

KUDOS FOR KELLEY

I want to let the public know how nice of a guy Kevin Kelley is. I have been a huge fan of his since I first got into boxing, and when *Heavyweight Explosion* came to Reno, I had a chance to meet him. Kevin was working as a commentator, and took time out to sign an autograph and have his picture taken with me. He even went the extra mile by taking a few minutes to talk. In conclusion, I want to say that "The Flushing Flash" is full of heart, cares about his fans, and is exactly what we need more of in this sport.

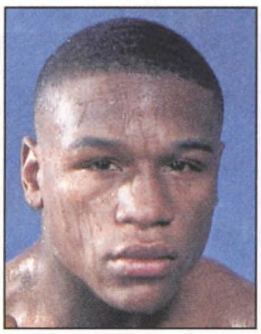
BRIAN BLUHN
Reno, NV ■

LOOKING AHEAD

By Eric Raskin

A SUMMER RE-RUN WORTH WATCHING

Say what you will about **Floyd Mayweather** and his problems outside the ring—or even inside the ring in his April 20 fight with **Jose Luis Castillo**—but one thing you can't accuse "Pretty Boy" of is ducking worthy adversaries. Mayweather loves a challenge, which is why he fought **Genaro Hernandez** in his 18th fight, **Angel Manfredy** one fight later, **Diego Corrales** in January '01, and Castillo in April. All four of those guys were perceived at the time as the number-one threat available to Mayweather. And by the time his 12 rounds with Castillo were done, it was clear that the Mexican is *still* the number-one threat to the lightweight champion, and Mayweather, true to form, is diving headfirst into a rematch.



Mayweather-Castillo: Immediate rematch

Promoter **Bob Arum** of Top Rank has the date of August 10 lined up, with the Staples Center in Los Angeles—where Mexicans and Mexican-Americans have drawn very well in major fights against African-Americans the last couple of years—as the leading candidate to host Mayweather-Castillo II. (As of press time, a couple of Las Vegas casinos were also in the running.) The bout will be televised by HBO Pay-Per-View, with Arum projecting as many as 300,000 buys, thanks to the entertaining action and controversial decision that led to Mayweather capturing the title in their first bout.

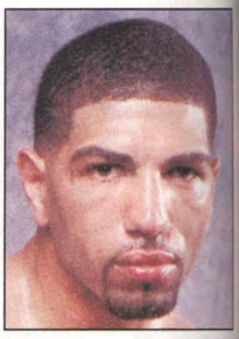
Top Rank publicist **Lee Samuels** said Mayweather's left shoulder was examined after the fight and Pretty Boy Floyd appears to have nothing more than a strained rotator cuff, a minor injury that won't stand in the way of the August date.

"Floyd doesn't have any problem with fighting Castillo again; it's the fight he wants more than any other," said Samuels. "Then after that, he wants **Paul Spadafora** and then **Kostya Tszyu**."

Maybe Mayweather ought to keep his mind on Castillo first, since he got all he could handle against the clever, powerful pressure fighter in their initial meeting. Many people think, in fact, that he got more than he could handle and should be ashamed of all the running he did over the second half of the fight. But at least he's running full steam toward the rematch, and a chance at redemption.

LISTEN UP

Hot welterweight **Antonio Margarito** is expected to fight in the main undercard attraction on the Mayweather-Castillo II show, probably against either **Andrew "Six Heads" Lewis** or up-and-coming **Danny Perez**, whose only loss in the last six years was an eight-round decision to Margarito ... Speaking of welterweights, **Vernon Forrest-Shane Mosley** II is a done deal for July 20 at Conseco Fieldhouse in Indianapolis, with HBO to televise ... And in case you haven't heard, the new date for **Oscar De La Hoya-Fernando Vargas** is September 14, at Mandalay Bay in Las Vegas ... **Stevie Johnston**, who was hoping for a shot at the winner of Mayweather-Castillo I, will instead fight the dangerous **Juan Lazcano** while waiting on the result of the lightweight title rematch. The winner of Johnston-Lazcano becomes the WBC mandatory challenger ... We still didn't know as of press time who **Roy Jones** was going to be fighting on his July 13 HBO date, but we do know what the co-feature will be: **Winky Wright-Bronco McKart** III. On the one hand, McKart, the mandatory to IBF junior middleweight titlist Wright, is as deserving as anyone else in the division, but on the other hand, Wright has already beaten him twice, including an easy, lopsided win the second time around. If Jones ends up fighting **Clinton Woods**, HBO shouldn't expect a whole lot of new subscribers to suddenly climb aboard on fight night ... **Manny Pacquiao**, rated by THE RING as the top contender to junior featherweight champ **Paulie Ayala**, will return to action on June 29 for his first fight since his bloody technical draw with **Agapito Sanchez** last November. Pacquiao, a native of the Philippines, will take on former flyweight titleholder **Hugo Soto** in a non-title fight in Manila. ■



Wright: Can't get away from McKart

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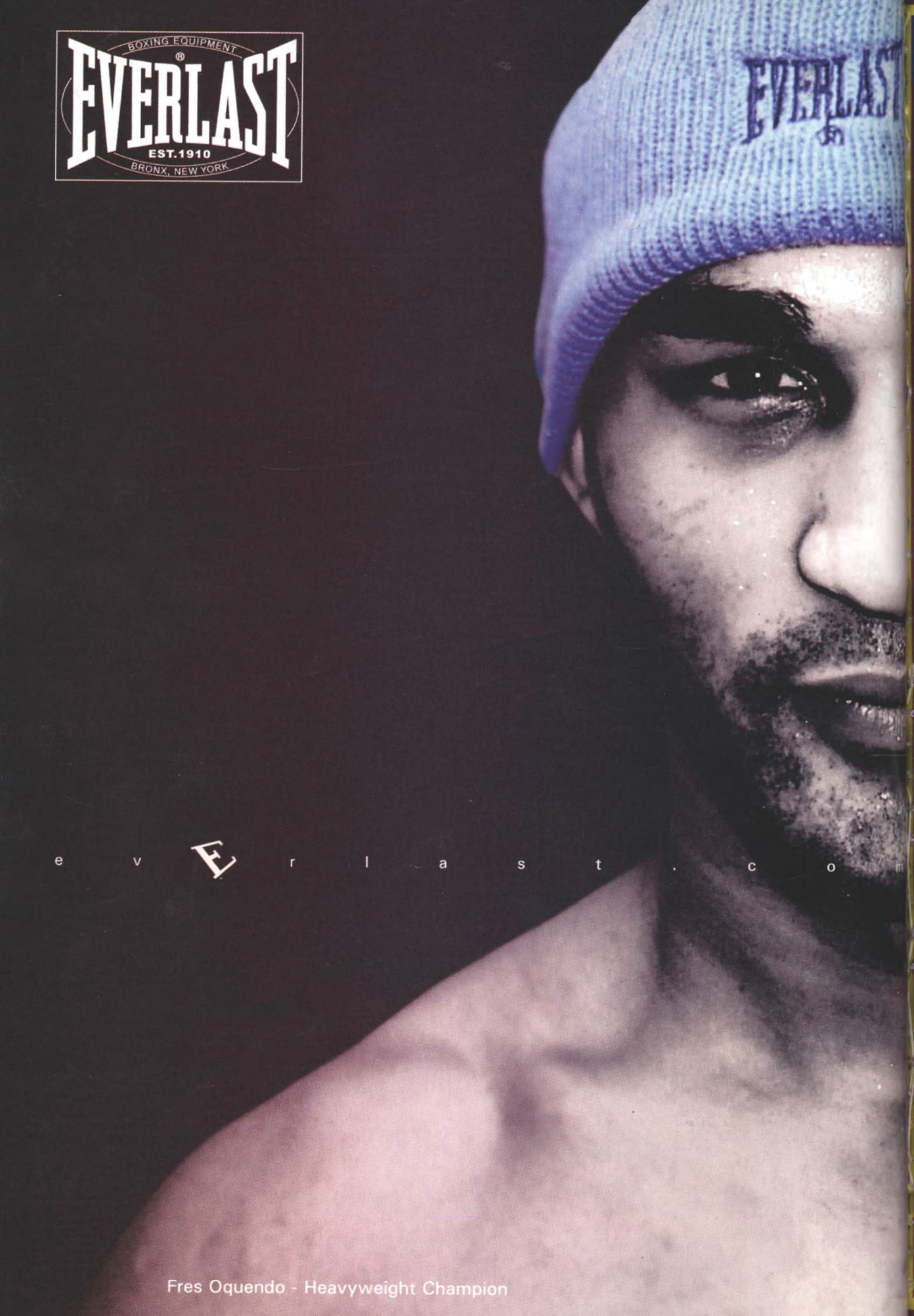
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